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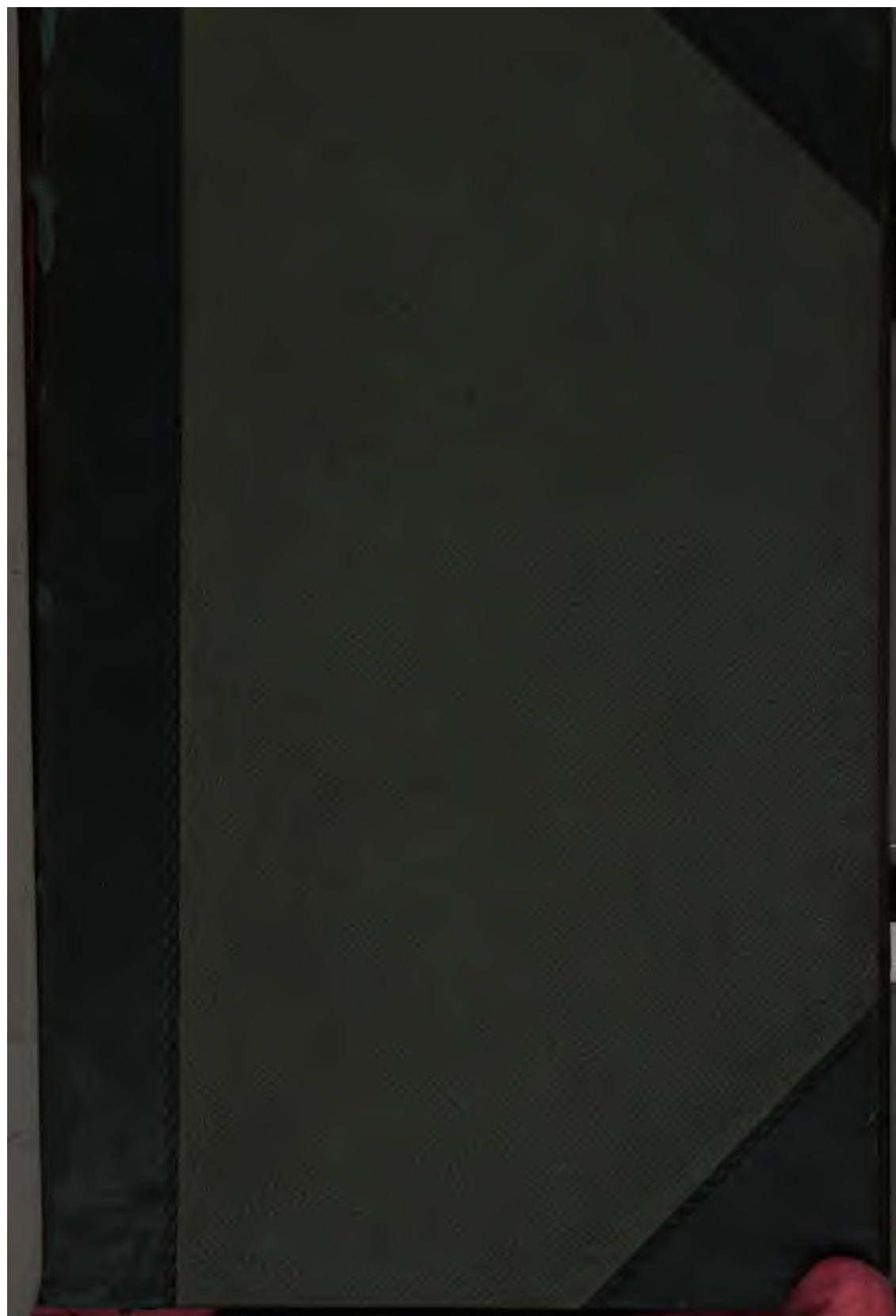
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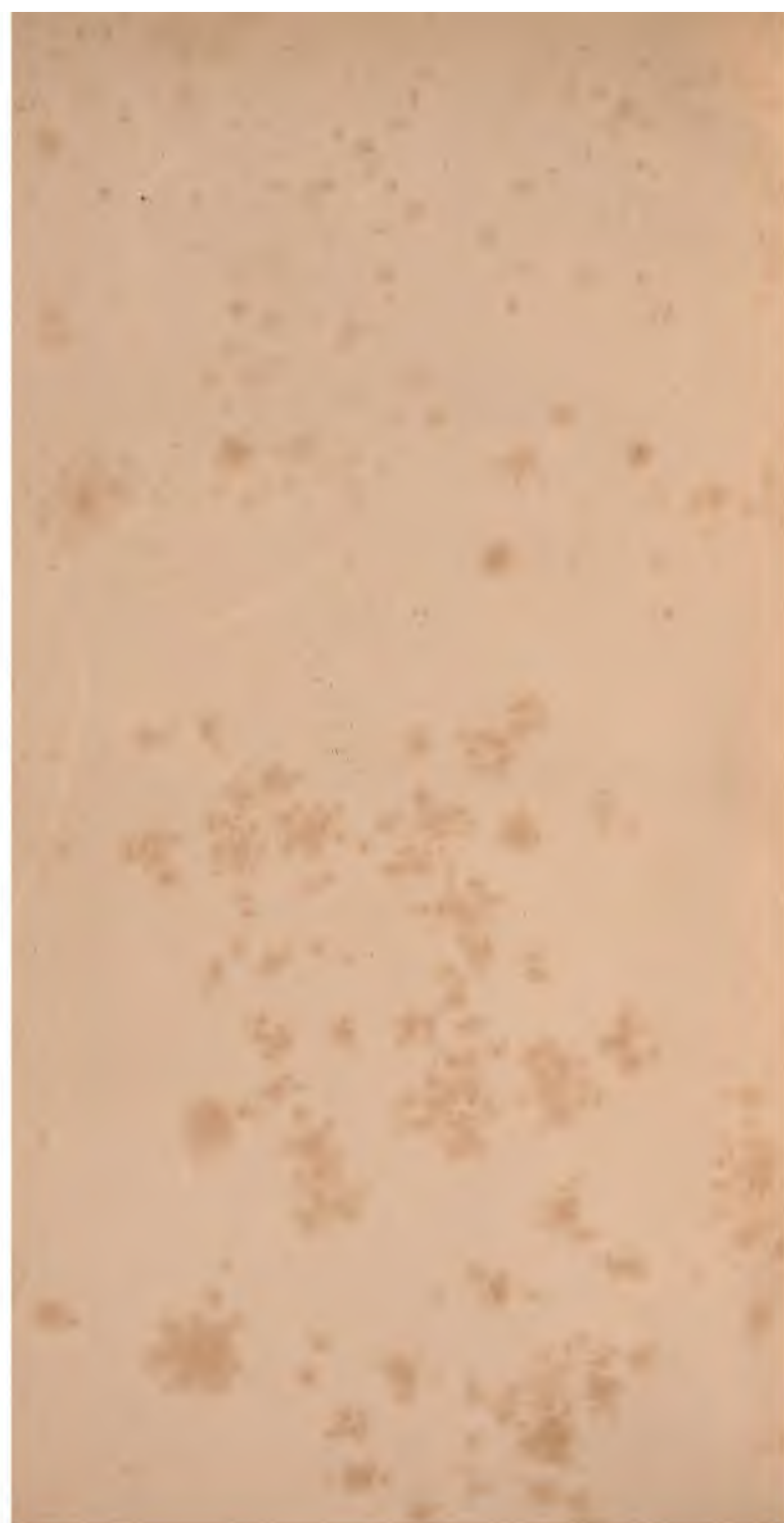
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SELECT SERMONS

FROM

JEAN-BAPTISTE MASSILLON,

BISHOP OF CLERMONT.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH

BY

RUTTON MORRIS,

TRANSLATOR OF *PENSÉES DE MASSILLON*, AND OF *ELÉMENTS DE LA*
GRAMMAIRE FRANÇAISE PAR LHOMOND.



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PREFACE.

MANY of the Sermons contained in this selection were preached upon extraordinary occasions, before Louis XIV. and his Court. They are—with the exception of occasional adulation and flattery—a striking example of ministerial zeal and faithfulness; and their general excellency and beauty have been admitted by all competent judges.

Numerous testimonies to the excellency of Massillon might, were it necessary, be here adduced: two may at present suffice,—that of Dr. Blair, who, comparing Massillon with Bourdaloue, observes, “he has more grace, more sentiment, and, in my opinion, every way more genius;” and that of Robinson, who, speaking of the Sermon on the Death of the Sinner and the Death of the Righteous Man, says, “That much-admired piece of modern eloquence, said by some good judges to be the finest piece of eloquence that the later ages have produced.....The whole Sermon consists of two—what shall I call them? pictures, or originals?—the one is a description of a dying saint, and the other that of an expiring sinner: they are inimitably beautiful.”

The public ministry of Massillon was, as might have been expected, attended with extraordinary effect: the haughty monarch, before

whom he preached, was made to feel the force of his appeals, and led to acknowledge that whenever he heard him he was dissatisfied with himself. And when Massillon delivered his discourse on the Small Number of the Elect, and made his bold and solemn application to the august assembly before which he stood, it is said that nearly the whole simultaneously arose, struck with astonishment and terror.

A little alteration might have given a more Evangelical turn to several passages; but the Translator, had he thus deviated from the original, would have departed from his province, and have assumed a liberty which did not belong to him. He has, however, added a few notes, as a check upon those sentiments of this celebrated writer which *he considers* particularly erroneous.

Though the Translator cannot refer to this esteemed writer for a clear statement of various important doctrines, for a plain exhibition of the way of reconciliation, or for the grounds of a sinner's justification before God, he considers his Discourses calculated for usefulness, and particularly suited to impress the mind of the reader with a conviction of the vanity of the world, the importance of religion, the reality of an hereafter, the certainty of death, and the solemnities of judgment. Or, to adopt the words of a friend, "The attentive reader will here find the most momentous and deeply interesting subjects exhibited under a variety of aspects, and in colouring most vivid and impressive. The sensual and
illy-minded, while they are warned of the

insufficient and evanescent nature of earth's 'best and brightest,' are called away to pursuits more worthy of immortal spirits; the indolent are roused from their apathetic slumbers, and urged to a noble exertion of their dormant energies; the arrogant assumptions and puerile objections of infidelity are met by convincing argument and indignant expostulation; and the unhallowed wisdom of a creed, as lofty in its pretensions as it is withering in its influence and unscriptural in its foundation, is shewn to be folly: while Divine honour is ascribed to Him, who, though He became a man of sorrow and acquainted with grief, shall yet, as 'God over all blessed for evermore,' one day receive the homage, willing or compelled, of universal creation."

Should these Sermons meet with a favourable reception, they may probably be followed by another volume, containing, together with a few other sermons, some of the Bishop's Charges to his clergy, and two or three funeral orations.

That these translations may, through the Divine blessing, produce some of those deep impressions upon the mind of the reader which were attributed to the public ministrations of the Bishop of Clermont, is the earnest prayer of

THE TRANSLATOR,

*Prior Place, Walworth,
Aug. 1830.*

Note.—The Translator subjoins a few extracts from the testimonies borne by Reviewers to his translation of

Massillon's "Thoughts on Moral and Religious Subjects," and of Lhomond's "Elements of French Grammar."—The works are on sale by the publishers of the present volume.

MASSILLON'S THOUGHTS.

"Massillon is well known to have been one of the most eloquent of the Catholic preachers of France in the reign of Louis XIV. Some of his discourses are supposed to exceed those of any preacher or writer of his age. His name has become that of eloquence itself. This volume contains many very just, original, and striking thoughts, and discovers much knowledge of the human heart."—*Evang. Mag. for Sept. 1824.*

"Of all the ornaments of the French Pulpit, Massillon is decidedly the chief. Bourdaloue will not stand in comparison for a moment: Bossuet, though his superiority in learning, vigour, originality, and imagination, is manifestly inferior in that which is properly eloquence."

"Under a variety of important heads, a number of detached passages are in this volume brought together, so as to produce an interesting and impressive whole. Mr. Morris's part of the work is respectably done; and if the translation does not *always* adequately express the fine flow and rich melody of the original, it is, at least, *far superior* to any former attempt that has fallen under our notice."—*Eclectic Review, May 1826.*

"The name of Massillon is too well known, and too much celebrated throughout the Christian world, either to dread an eclipse, or to require commendation. Associated with Saurin and Fenelon, these illustrious divines form a brilliant constellation in the hemisphere of theology, and ages must elapse before they dwindle into stars of the second magnitude."

"The subjects collected together in this volume are fifty-eight in number; among which, the virtues that adorn and the vices that dishonour human nature hold a conspicuous rank. Several important topics, which enter into the essence of morals and divinity, here present themselves to our view embodied in *language* that in every sentence exhibits the emanations of a refined and vigorous intellect."—[After several extracts]

"The preceding passages exhibit an impartial sample of what this book contains; further quotations would be useless, and additional remarks can be of no avail; its excellency protecting it from censure, and placing it beyond the influence of applause."—*Imperial Mag. March 1825.*

LHOMOND'S ELEMENTS OF FRENCH GRAMMAR.

"Lhomond's Grammar is the most simple, the most easy, and the most conformed to the orthography of the Academy."—*Le Petit Dictionnaire de L'Académie Française.*

"This is a *very good* French Grammar, of about the compass of Murray's Abridged English Grammar, and such as might answer the same purpose. It appears from the preface to be the book generally first used for teaching the language in France."—*Assistant of Education, Dec. 1826.*

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ERRATUM.

Page 237, line 25 : *for* death of the sinner, *read* life of the sinner.

SERMON I.

ON THE TRUTH OF RELIGION.

MATT. viii. 10.

*Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no,
not in Israel.*

WHENCE doth that unbelief arise, for which Jesus Christ this day reproves the Jews? And what cause had they still to suspect the holiness of His doctrine and the truth of His ministry? They had required miracles, and He had wrought such convincing ones in their presence as no person before Him had ever performed. They had expressed a desire to see His mission confirmed by evidence—Moses and the Prophets had borne testimony to Him—the forerunner had boldly declared, “This is the Christ,” and “The Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world.” A Gentile, as recorded in this Gospel, ascribes glory to his almighty power: God the Father had declared by a voice from heaven, “This is my beloved Son:” and the very demons, awed by His sanctity, came forth from the bodies of the possessed confessing that He was “the Holy One,” and “the Son of the living God.” What could the unbelieving Jews continue to oppose to such evidence and miracles?

These, my brethren, are inquiries which we might, with much greater astonishment, this day propose to those incredulous spirits who, after the accomplishment of all that had been predicted, after the consummation of the mysteries of Christ, the exaltation of his Name, the manifestation of His gifts, the calling of the nations, the abolition

of idols, the conversion of emperors and sovereigns, the consent of the whole world, continue to doubt ; and who undertake alone to controvert and to overthrow what the labours of the Apostles, the blood of the whole army of martyrs, the prodigies wrought by numerous servants of Christ, the writings of illustrious men, the austerities of holy anchorites, and the religion of seventeen centuries have so universally and divinely established in the mind of almost every people.

For, my brethren, amidst the triumphs of the faith, children of disobedience continue secretly to arise among us—persons whom God hath given up to the vanity of their minds, who speak evil of the things which they know not ; ungodly men, who, as saith the Apostle, turn the grace of our God into licentiousness ; who defile the flesh, despise dominions, speak evil of dignities, and, like the brute, devoid of reason, corrupt all their ways ; and who are reserved to become, at a future day, an example of the terrible and righteous judgments of God.

Now, if among this numerous company of believers, congregated by a regard to religion, there should be found one individual of this description, permit me, my brethren—you who preserve a respect for the doctrine which you have received from your ancestors and pastors,—to embrace this opportunity, either to undeceive or to oppose him. Permit me for once to attempt what the primitive pastors of the church frequently did before their assembled congregations ; namely, to undertake the vindication of the religion of Jesus Christ, in opposition to infidelity ; and, before I instruct you in your duty, during this long term, to commence by establishing the foundations of the faith. It is consoling to believers, to discover the reasonableness of their submission, and to be convinced that the doctrines of faith, which appear a stumbling block to reason, are nevertheless its sole consolation, guide, and resource.

This is the whole of my design. The unbeliever refuses to submit to revealed truth, from a vain affectation of

reason, from an erroneous sentiment of pride, or from a misplaced love of independence. Now, I wish this day to shew that the submission which the unbeliever refuses, through a vain affectation of superior reason, is nevertheless the wisest course which even reason itself can adopt; that the submission which he, through pride, refuses, is the most glorious step that can be taken; and, finally, that the submission which he withholds, through a misplaced love of independence, is a sacrifice the most indispensable. And from thence I shall derive the three principal characteristics of religion: it is reasonable; it is honourable; it is necessary.

O my Saviour, thou eternal Author and Finisher of our faith, defend thine own doctrine! Permit not the doctrine of thy Cross, which has subdued the universe, still to be the folly and reproach of the proud. Triumph once again, this day, by the secret wonders of thy grace, over the same unbelief as thou didst formerly triumph over, by the overwhelming manifestations of thy power; and by that quick and vivid light which at once illuminates the mind more efficaciously than all our discourses, destroy thou every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of thy mysteries!

Part I.—Let us, my brethren, begin by admitting, in the first place, that it is faith, and not reason, which makes a Christian; and that the first step which is required of the disciple of Christ, is to bring his mind into subjection, and to the belief of those truths which he cannot fully comprehend. Nevertheless, I maintain that it is reason itself which leads us to this submission; that the greater our light, the more we feel the necessity of such submission; and that unbelief, so far from being allied to superiority of mind and of reason, is, on the contrary, the offspring of error and weakness.

Reason has, therefore, its use in religion, as well as its limits: and as the law of God, which is holy, just, and

good, only serves to conduct men to Jesus Christ, and terminates in Him as its end ; so reason, which is good and just in itself, since it is a gift of God, and a communication from the Sovereign Reason, is given to us, and ought to be exerted only to lead us to the faith. It becomes presumptuous, and passes its originally appointed limits, when it wishes to break through those sacred inclosures.

This being supposed, let us see which of the two makes the best use of his reason,—the believer or the unbeliever. Our submission to facts proposed to our belief may be ascribed to credulity, either on the ground of the authority which avails with us—if that is defective, it is weakness to receive it ;—or on the ground of the things themselves to which our assent may be required—if they are opposed to the principles of equity, of honour, of society, or of conscience, it is ignorance to admit them as truth ;—or, finally, on the ground of the motives employed to convince us—if they are vain, frivolous, and insufficient to determine a wise man, it is imprudent to suffer ourselves to be deceived by them. Now, it is easy to demonstrate that the authority which requires the submission of the faithful is the strongest, the most respectable, and the best established of any upon the earth ; that the truths which are recommended to them are conformable to the principles of equity, of honour, of society, and of conscience ; and, finally, that the motives, which are employed to persuade them, are the most decisive, the most triumphant, and the most suited to compel the assent of minds at the farthest remove from credulity.

When I speak of the authority of the Christian religion, I propose not to confine that term to the authority of those holy assemblies, in which the church, by its pastors, forms decisions, and proposes to all the faithful the infallible rules of worship and of doctrine. As this discourse relates, not to heresy, but to unbelief, I do not particularly consider religion, at this time, as opposed to those sects which error has dissociated from the only catholic church ; but.

as forming, since the creation of the world, a separate society; the sole guardian of the knowledge of God, and of the promise of a Mediator; always opposed to the different religions which have since arisen in the world; always contradicted, yet always the same: and I say, that its authority carries with it such brilliant characters of its truth, that we cannot refuse our assent to it without absurdity.

In the first place, *antiquity* is a characteristic in religion which reason respects; and we may add, that a faith consecrated by the worship and the simplicity of the earliest times creates a prepossession in its favour. Falsehood has, indeed, frequently boasted that it possessed the same claims; and there have been errors, which have appeared to vie even with the truth in point of antiquity. But if any one will examine their history, he will find it easy to trace them back to their birth. Novelty is always found the most constant and inseparable characteristic of error; and we may apply to it, in all its forms, the reproach of the prophet, "They sacrificed . . . to new gods that came newly up, whom your fathers feared not." (Deut. xxxii. 17.)

Indeed, if there is a true religion upon the earth, it must be the most ancient, and also the first and most important duty of man towards God, who will be glorified. It must, therefore, be co-eval with man; and as it is connected with his nature, it ought, so to speak, to be born with him. And this, my brethren, is the first characteristic which then distinguished the Christian religion from superstitions and heresies. It is the most ancient religion which has existed in the world. The first men, before the votaries of an impious worship had carved divinities of wood and of stone, adored the same God that we adore; to Him they reared altars and offered sacrifices; from His benignity they expected the recompence of their virtue, and from His justice the chastisement of their disobedience. The history of the origin of this religion, is the history of the origin of the world itself. The sacred books which

have transmitted it even to us, contain the first memorials of the origin of all things. They are more ancient than all the fabulous productions of the human mind, which have so sported with the credulity of succeeding ages ; and as error is always derived from truth, of which it is only a corrupt imitation, it is from the principal circumstances of that sacred history, that the fables of Paganism derive their foundation ; so that we may say, that there is nothing—not even error itself—which does not pay homage to the antiquity and authority of our sacred writings.

Now, my brethren, does not this single characteristic of religion possess something that commands respect ? Other religions, which have boasted a more ancient origin, have presented as evidence of their antiquity only fabulous narrations which involve their own confutation. They have disfigured the history of the world by a chaos of innumerable and imaginary periods of which no events remain to posterity, and concerning which the history of the world is altogether silent. The authors of those gross fictions did not write till many centuries after the pretended deeds which they relate : and it is to say every thing to add, that their theology was the production of poetry ; and that the inventions of that art were the most solid foundation of their religion.

Here we have a succession of facts that are reasonable and natural, and consistent with each other. It is the history of one family continued from its first progenitor to the person who wrote it, and that is verified in all its circumstances. It is a genealogy in which each head is distinguished by his proper characteristics, by events which continued to subsist, by striking deeds that were still acknowledged in the places which they had inhabited. It is a living tradition, the most certain that then existed in the world, since Moses only wrote what had been told to the children of the patriarchs ; and the children of the patriarchs related only what their fathers had themselves beheld. Every thing is supported, is connected, and carries

along with it its evidence. The remarkable actions are not imitated, nor the adventures drawn from another source, and accommodated to the subject. Before the time of Moses, the people of God had no written account. He left to posterity what he had collected from the living voice of his ancestors; that is to say, the whole tradition of the human race: he was the first who reduced into one book the history of the wonderful works of God, and of His manifestation to men, the remembrance of which had, till then, constituted all the religion, knowledge, and consolation of the family of Abraham. The fidelity of that author appears in the simplicity of his history. He took no precautions to obtain credit, because he supposed that those for whom he wrote did not need them to procure their belief; and as he only narrated public events which had occurred among themselves, rather to preserve their remembrance to their descendants, than for their own information.

Such, my brethren, are the means by which the Christian religion began to acquire influence over the minds of men. Look on every side—read the history of nations and kingdoms—you will find nothing more fully accredited; nay, nothing which even merits the regard of a sensible mind. If there is a Supreme Being who has shewn the truth to men, there is no other religion which is either worthy of them or of Himself. Every where else the origin of things is mere fable: *here*, it is as certain as every thing that follows; and the accounts of these latter ages, which we cannot dispute, establish the truth of those of the first. Therefore, if there is any authority in the world to which reason ought to submit, it is that of the Christian religion.

—To the characteristic of antiquity, we must add that of *perpetuity*. Here place before you the infinite variety of religions and sects, which have alternately prevailed in the world. Trace the successive superstitions of every age and country: they continued a certain number of years, and then sank together with the power of their votaries.

Where are the gods of Hamath, of Arpha, and of Sepharvaim ? Call to mind the history of the first conquerors : they conquered the gods of the nations, by subduing the people, and abolished their worship by overturning their dominion. How great a satisfaction, my brethren, to see that the religion of our fathers alone has maintained itself from the beginning, and survived every sect ; that it has, notwithstanding the diverse fortunes of those who professed it, passed from the fathers to the children ; and that it never could be effaced from the remembrance of men ! It has not been preserved by an arm of flesh. Ah no ! the faithful have almost always been a weak, oppressed, and persecuted people. It was not by the sword, as saith the prophet, that our fathers got the land in possession. Sometimes they were slaves, sometimes they were fugitives, and at other times they were tributaries to the nations ; they saw Chaldea, Assyria, Babylon, and the most formidable powers of the earth, even the whole universe, a thousand times, conspire their ruin, and the entire extinction of their worship : but this feeble people who were oppressed in Egypt, who wandered in the wilderness, and who were afterwards carried away captive into foreign lands, could never be exterminated, while many more powerful nations have followed the destiny of human things : and their worship has always subsisted together with themselves, in spite of all the efforts which have been made to destroy it, in almost every age.

Now whence is it, my brethren, that a mode of worship so much opposed, so painful in its services, so severe in the chastisements which it inflicts upon transgressors, and so liable to be weakened and ruined by the inconsistency and grossness of the people who were its guardians—whence is it that this worship alone has been perpetuated in the midst of so many revolutions, while various superstitions, supported by the power of empires and kingdoms, have again fallen into the non-existence from which they were taken ? Ah ! was it not God, and not man, who per-

formed all these things? Was it not the arm of the Almighty which preserved His own works? And since all that the human mind had invented has perished, must we not conclude that that which has always continued was the work of Divine wisdom? *Nonne Deus fecit, hæc omnia, et non homo?*

If to its antiquity and perpetuity, you add its *uniformity*, no excuse will remain by which reason can justify its unbelief. For every thing, my brethren, changes upon the earth—every thing follows the mutability of its origin. Circumstances, successive ages, the diverse temperatures of climate, and the necessity of the times, have introduced a thousand alterations into human laws. Revelation alone has remained invariably the same. As our fathers received it, so we possess it at this day, and so it will be transmitted to our posterity. It has, I admit, been unfolded by successive ages, and by the necessity of securing it from the errors which some have endeavoured to mingle with it; but that which at one time has appeared to belong to it, has always appeared to do so. It is easy for any thing to continue which can be accommodated to times and to circumstances, and which we can add to, or take from, according to the taste of the age, or of those in authority. But never to relax in the least, notwithstanding a change of manners, and of times; to see every thing continually varying, and yet to remain always the same, is the prerogative of the Christian religion; and by these three characteristics—*antiquity*, *perpetuity*, and *uniformity*, which are peculiar to it—it is found to be the only authority in the world which is capable of determining a wise man.

But if the submission of the faithful is reasonable on account of the authority which enjoins it, it is not less so on account of the things which it proposes for belief. And here, my brethren, let us thoroughly examine the worship of Christians: for it fears not a strict examination, like the abominable mysteries of idolatry, whose obscurities conceal their shameful and horrid nature. “A religion,”

said Tertullian, "which dreads examination is suspicious :"
Ceterum suspecta est lex quæ probari non vult. The more you search into the worship of Christians, the more hidden beauties and wonders will you discover. Idolatry inspired men with ridiculous sentiments respecting the Divinity ; philosophy with inconsistent sentiments respecting themselves, and cupidity with unjust sentiments towards others. Now, admire the wisdom of that religion which heals these three diseases, which the reason of all ages could neither cure nor discover.

And in the first place, what lawgiver has ever spoken of the Divinity like ours ? Discover else where, if you can, more sublime ideas of His power, immensity, wisdom, goodness, and justice, than those which are given to us in our sacred books. If there be a supreme and eternal Being over us, in whom all things exist, He must be such as the Christian religion represents Him. We, and we only, never compare Him to the likeness of man. We alone adore Him, as dwelling between the cherubim, filling all things with His presence, regulating all things by His wisdom, creating both the darkness, and the light, the Author of good, and the Avenger of evil. We alone honour Him as He would be honoured ; that is to say, we never make the worship which is due to Him to consist in the multitude of the victims, which we offer, or in the outward pomp of our homage, but in adoration, love, praise and thanksgiving. We ascribe all the good that is in us to Him, as to its origin ; and the vice, which derives its source only from our own depravity, to ourselves. We expect from him the recompence of the fidelity which is the gift of His grace, and the punishment of the transgressions which are always the consequence of the abuse of our liberty. Now, what can be considered more worthy of the Supreme Being than these ideas ?

In the second place, a vain philosophy, either degraded man to the level of the brute, by leading him to seek his felicity in sensual indulgences ; or it foolishly exalted him

into the resemblance of God, by persuading him that he could find his felicity in his own wisdom. Now, the morals of Christians avoid these two extremes: they withdraw man from carnal pleasures, by discovering to him the excellencies of his nature, and the holy design of his creation; and they correct his pride, by making him feel his misery and his meanness.

Finally, cupidity rendered man unjust to others. Now, what doctrine has better regulated our duties than the Christian? It teaches us to obey the powers that be as ordained of God, not only for fear of the power, but also for conscience-sake, to respect our superiors, to bear with our equals, to be affable to our inferiors, and to love all men as ourselves. This alone makes good citizens, faithful subjects, patient servants, humble masters, incorruptible magistrates, merciful princes and sincere friends. This alone renders the marriage contract inviolable, ensures the peace of families, and maintains the tranquillity of states. It not only prohibits usurpations, it forbids even our coveting the property of another: it not only disallows our regarding the goods of our brother with an envious eye, but it commands us to divide our property with him when his necessities require it: it not only forbids our attacking his life; but it requires that we do good to those who injure us, that we bless them that curse us, and that we all have but one heart and one soul. "Present me," said Augustin formerly to the Pagans of his time, "a kingdom composed wholly of persons of this description. Gracious God! what peace! what felicity! what an image of heaven upon earth! Have the sentiments of philosophers ever approached the plan of this celestial republic? And must it not be admitted that God, if He spake to men to shew them the way of salvation, could address them in no other language?"

It is true, that to all these maxims, so worthy of reason, religion adds mysteries which surpass our comprehension. And while good sense would require our submission to a

religion so venerable for its antiquity, so Divine in its morals, so superior in its evidence to every thing in the world, and the only one which is deserving of credit, the motives which it suggests to persuade us compel the assent even of unbelief.

First, These mysteries were predicted several centuries before their accomplishment, and predicted with all the circumstances of time and of place, and with the most minute particulars : and these prophecies were not like those vague predictions which are referred to the credulity of the illiterate vulgar—which are published only in some private corner of the earth—which are always of the same age with the events which they announce, and that are unknown in every other part of the world. These are prophecies which have constituted, since the creation of the world, all the religion of a whole nation : fathers transmitted them to their children, as their most precious heritage ; they were preserved in the holy temple, as the most sacred pledge of the Divine promises, and finally that very nation which is the greatest enemy to Jesus Christ, and among whom they were first deposited, attest their truth at this very day in the face of the whole world : these prophecies were not mysteriously concealed from the people, lest they should discover their falsehood, like the vain oracles of the sybils, which, being forged to support the pride of the Romans, were laid up with care in the capitol, and never exposed to the eyes of any but the pontiffs ; which were produced only in fragments from time to time, to sanction, in the minds of the people, either some perilous enterprise, or some unrighteous war. Our prophetic books were daily read by a whole nation. The young and the aged, women and children, the priests and the commonalty, kings and their subjects, were bound to have them constantly in their hands : every one had a right to consult them, therein to study his duty, and to discover his hopes. Instead of flattering their pride, they only spake of the ingratitude of their fathers : they an-

nounced calamities to them in every page, as the just punishment of their crimes : they reproved kings for their licentiousness, priests for their injustice, the great for their profusions, the people for their inconstancy and unbelief : and yet these sacred books were dear to them ; and from the prophecies which they saw daily fulfilled, they expected, with confidence, the accomplishment of those to which the whole world is this day a witness. Now, the knowledge of the future is a most indubitable evidence of their Divinity.

Secondly, These mysteries were established by miraculous deeds, so striking, so well known throughout Judea, so unquestioned at the time even by those who had an interest in denying them, so marked by events which interested the whole nation, so frequently repeated in their towns, in their villages, in the temple, and in their public places, that before we can call them in question we must close our eyes against the clearest light of evidence. The Apostles preached and wrote of them even in Judea shortly after their performance—that is to say, while the very priests who had condemned Jesus Christ, being still alive, might have publicly confronted and exposed them, had they really attempted an imposition upon the human race. Jesus Christ, by rising again, according to his promise, confirmed the truth of his Gospel : and we cannot suppose, either that the Apostles were deceived concerning so important and decisive a fact—a fact which had been often foretold, which was expected as the principal point to which all the rest referred, and which was frequently confirmed before numerous witnesses—or that they themselves could have wished to deceive us, and to proclaim an untruth to mankind, at the expense of their repose, their honour, and their lives, the only reward which they could expect from their hypocrisy. These men, who have left us the most wise and pious instructions, must, in that case, have exhibited to the world an example of extravagance before unknown among any people ; and have deliberately,

without any object, interest, or motive, devoted themselves to the severest torments, and to a death endured with heroic piety, only that they might maintain as a truth what they themselves knew to be false ! Could all these men have cheerfully died for a man who had imposed upon them ; and who, not having risen again according to his promise, had, during his life, sported with their weakness and credulity ? Let the infidel no longer impute to us as credulity the belief of the incomprehensible mysteries of Revelation. He must be credulous indeed who can believe such incredible hypotheses.

Finally, The revelation of these mysteries found the whole world docile,—Roman emperors, whom it degraded from the rank of gods ; philosophers, whom it convicted of ignorance and vanity ; the voluptuous, to whom it announced crosses and sufferings ; the rich, whom it bound to poverty and self-denial ; the poor, whom it commanded to love their indigence and abasement ; and men of all descriptions, whose every sinful passion it opposed. This faith, preached by twelve poor men, without learning, talents, or support, has subjected the powerful, the learned, and the illiterate ; yea, whole cities and empires. Mysteries so apparently foolish have overturned every sect and every monument erected by a proud reason ; and the foolishness of the Cross has been wiser than all the wisdom of the age. What do I say ? The whole world conspired against it, and the efforts of its enemies have only confirmed its truth. To be a believer, and to be destined to martyrdom, were two things inseparably connected ; and yet the danger became a new attraction : the more violent the persecution, the more widely was the faith diffused ; and the blood of the martyrs became the seed of the church. O God ! who would not here discern Thine hand ? who would not recognise in these striking phenomena the characteristics of Thy work ? Where is the reason which does not perceive its vain objections give way before such evidence, or that still blushes to submit to a doctrine which has triumphed

over the whole world? But this submission is not only reasonable—it is honourable to man.

Part II.—Pride is the secret source of unbelief. There is, in that parade of reason which leads the unbeliever to despise the common faith, a lamentable singularity, which flatters him, and which leads him to suppose that he possesses more knowledge and courage than others, since he has dared to shake off a yoke to which they are subject, and rashly to contradict what others before him were content to adore.

Now to deprive the unbeliever of such a dreadful consolation, we have only to shew, that there is nothing more honourable to reason than the Christian faith: it is honourable with respect to the promises which it contains relative to futurity; honourable on account of the state into which it at present introduces the believer, and honourable with respect to the great examples which it proposes for his imitation.

It is honourable with respect to the promises which it contains. What, my brethren, are the promises of revelation?—Adoption of God, an everlasting communion with Him, the complete redemption of our bodies, the eternal felicity of our souls, a freedom from sinful passions, the having our hearts fixed by the possession of the true riches, our minds penetrated with the ineffable light of the Supreme Reason, and made happy through the clear and constant view of the truth. Such are the promises of revelation: it shews us that our origin is Divine, and that our hopes are eternal.

Now, I ask, does it degrade reason to believe truths which do so much honour to the immortality of its nature? What, my brethren! would it be more honourable to man to believe himself of the same nature with the brute, and to expect the same end? What! shall the unbeliever think he does himself more honour by believing that he consists of mere particles of clay, which chance has thrown to-

gether, and which chance will dissolve—that he was thus formed without any design, destination, or hope, without any other employment for his body or mind than that of plunging, like the brute animal, into carnal pleasures? What! would he entertain a higher opinion of himself, from believing that he is a miserable being placed by chance upon the earth—a being that expects nothing after the present life, and whose sweetest hope is that he shall soon return into non-existence—that he is related to no other being, and is compelled to seek his felicity wholly within himself, where he can find only secret terrors and disquietudes? Is this then the horrible distinction which so much flatters the pride of the unbeliever? Great God! how glorious is it to thy truth, to have none for its enemies but men of such a character! “As for me,” said St. Ambrose formerly to the unbelievers of his time, “I glory in believing truths so honourable to man; *Juvat hoc credere*; and in expecting the fulfilment of such consolatory promises; *sperare delectat*: to refuse the belief of them were grievously to punish ourselves; *non credidisse parva est*. Ah! if I am deceived in preferring the hope of enjoying the eternal society of the righteous in the bosom of God, to the believing myself of the same nature with the brute, it is an error that I love, that is dear to me, and respecting which I never wish to be undeceived: *Quòd si in hoc erro, quòd me angelis post mortem sociare malo quàm bestiis, libenter in hoc erro, nec unquam ab hac opinione, dum vivo, fraudari patiar*.”

If the faith is honourable on account of the promises which it contains relative to futurity, it is not less so on account of the state into which it now introduces the believer. And here, my brethren, picture to yourselves a truly good man who lives by faith, and you will allow that there is nothing so great upon the earth. He is master of his desires and inclinations; he exercises a glorious control over himself; he possesses his soul in patience and equanimity, and keeps his passions within the bounds

of temperance; he is humble in prosperity, firm under reproach, joyful in tribulation, meek even among those who are enemies to peace, insensible to injuries, affected with the afflictions of those who insult him, faithful to his promises, constant in his friendship, immoveable in the discharge of his desires; undisturbed by riches, which he despises; perplexed by honours, which he fears; greater than the world, which he regards as a mere pile of dust and dross. What elevation of mind!

Philosophy could only overcome some vices by cherishing others. It ostentatiously taught contempt for the world, only to attract its applause. It was more anxious to enjoy the reputation of wisdom, than to obtain wisdom itself. While it destroyed the other passions it always raised pride, a more dangerous one, upon their ruins: like that king of Babylon who overthrew the altars dedicated to the gods of the nations, only that he might rear upon their ruins his own impious statue—that towering colossus of pride which he would have the whole world to adore.

But faith exalts the righteous man even above his practical virtues. It makes him still greater in the secret recesses of his heart, and in the eyes of God, than before men. He forgives without pride; he is disinterested without ostentation; he suffers without wishing to be noticed; he restrains his passions without being conscious of it himself; he is the only person who is ignorant of the glory and merit of his actions; instead of casting looks of complacency upon himself, he is ashamed of his virtues more than the sinner is of his vices: so far from seeking applause, he conceals his works of light, as though they were works of darkness: no motive is connected with his virtue but the love of duty; he acts as under the eye of God, and as though there were no longer men upon the earth. What elevation of mind! Find, if you can, any thing in the world that is more truly great. Consider all the various kinds of glory with which the world honours the vanity of men; and see whether the concentrated re-

splendence of the whole may compare with that glory, to which faith exalteth the good man.

Now, my dear hearer, what state is more honourable to man? Dost thou, I would ask, think him more noble or dignified, when he follows the impulse of a brutal instinct—when he is the bond-slave of hatred, revenge, pleasure, ambition, envy, and of all those monsters which alternately triumph in his breast?

For dost thou, who valueth thyself upon thy unbelief, really know what an unbeliever is? He is a man alike destitute of morals, probity and character—a man who has no rule but his passions—no law but his evil propensities—no master but his inclinations—no restraint but the fear of authority, and no God but himself; he is an unnatural child, since he thinks it was chance alone which gave him parents—an unfaithful friend, since he regards men as only the sad offspring of a whimsical and fortuitous connexion, to which he is bound only by transient ties—a cruel master, since he is persuaded that the strongest and most fortunate are always in the right. For who can henceforth put any confidence in thee? Thou no longer fearest God, nor regardest man: thou expectest nothing beyond the present life: virtue and vice appear to thee the prejudices of childhood, and the consequence of vulgar credulity. Adultery, revenge, blasphemy, atrocious perfidies, and abominations, which we dare not mention, are no longer, in thy view, any other than human prohibitions, and rules established by the policy of legislators. The most dreadful crimes and the purest virtues, are the same with thee, since an eternal annihilation will soon reduce the righteous and the wicked to the same level, and for ever confound them in the horrors of the tomb. What a monster then art thou upon the earth! Does the portraiture which we have just drawn to thee of thyself greatly flatter thy pride? Canst thou even bear the delineation?

Besides, thou ascribest the honour of thy irreligion to thy superior sense; but trace it to its source. What led

thee to a licentious course? Was it not the depravity of thine heart? Wouldest thou ever have thought of becoming irreligious, if thou couldest have united thy pleasures with religion? Thou didst begin to doubt a doctrine which laid a restraint on thy passions; and thou believedst it false, when it became inconvenient. Thou didst seek to persuade thyself of the truth of that which thou hadst so great an interest in believing; that every thing would die with thyself; that everlasting torments were only terrors arising from the prejudices of education; that propensities con-natural with our existence could not be criminal, and in short that all the maxims of libertinism, which came forth from hell, were true. We easily believe what we desire. Solomon adored the gods of strange women, only that he might be at ease in his irregularities. If men had never been the subjects of criminal passions, or if religion had sanctioned them, unbelievers would never have appeared upon the earth. And a proof of the truth of this remark is found in the fact that at those times in which thou art disgusted with crime, thou involuntarily turnest to religion; in those moments in which thy passions are the most calm thy doubts diminish: thou, then, in spite of thyself, payest an internal homage to the truth of religion. In vain dost thou weaken thy convictions; thou canst not succeed in suppressing them: at the first tokens of approaching death, thou liftest up thine eyes to Heaven, thou acknowledgest the God who afflicts thee, thou throwest thyself into the bosom of thy Father and Creator, thou tremblest at the thought of a futurity which thou boastedst thou didst not believe; and, humbled under the hand of the Almighty just ready to fall upon thee and to crush thee as a worm of the earth, thou confessest that He alone is great, wise, and immortal, and that man is only vanity and lies.

Finally, if my subject required further evidence, I would shew you how the faith is honourable to man by the great examples which it proposes for our imitation. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, said the Jews formerly to their

children. Remember the holy men who have preceded you, whose faith obtained a good report, said St. Paul to the faithful, in that admirable chapter of his Epistle to the Hebrews, after having enumerated in succession their names and the most marvellous circumstances of their history.

Behold in this the superiority of the Christian faith. Recollect all the great men which it has furnished in every age; princes how magnanimous, conquerors how pious; pastors how venerable, philosophers how enlightened, sages how estimable, illustrious spirits how renowned in their age, martyrs how courageous, hermits how penitent, virgins how constant and devout, and heroes how exalted in every walk of virtue! Philosophers taught a pompous wisdom; but that wisdom was no where exemplified. Here, what a cloud of witnesses! what an uninterrupted succession of Christian heroes, from the blood of Abel to our own times!

Now, I ask, will you blush to walk in the steps of so many illustrious characters? Place on one side all the great men whom religion has, in every age, presented to the world; and on the other, the small number of atrocious and desperate spirits which infidelity has formed. Now does it appear to you more honourable to range yourselves with this last party?—to take as your guides and examples, those whose names are remembered only with horror—those monsters which it has pleased Providence to permit nature from time to time to produce; or the Abrahams, the Josephs, the Moseses, the Davids, the Apostles, the righteous of ancient and modern times? Sustain, if you can, this parallel. “Ah! if you believe me in an error,” said St. Jerome formerly upon a different occasion, “it is my glory to be deceived with such guides: *Si me deprehenderit errantem, patere me, quæso; errare cum talibus.*”

And here permit me, my brethren, to leave unbelievers for a moment and to address myself to you. Avowed unbelief is perhaps a rare vice among us; but simplicity of faith is not less so. We should be shocked at the

thought of abandoning the faith of our fathers; but we wish to refine upon their sincerity. We do not allow ourselves to entertain doubts respecting the sacred mysteries; but we obey as philosophers, by imposing the yoke upon ourselves, by weighing different sacred truths; receiving some as rational, reasoning upon and judging of others by our own feeble light. Our age, especially, is full of these half-believers, who, under the pretence of stripping religion of all that credulity or prejudice has added thereto, deprive faith of the whole merit of submission*.

Now, my brethren, religion requires you to speak of faith only with sacred circumspection. It is a virtue as delicate almost as modesty: it is wounded by the slightest suspicion, or by a single word: it is tarnished, so to speak, by a mere breath. And yet what liberty do not men take at the present day, in discoursing concerning those things which were the most venerable in the faith of our fathers? The terrible name of Jehovah could not be pronounced under the law by the mouth of man. But now, alas! all that religion possesses, the most august, is become the subject of worldly conversations; in them men speak and decide freely upon every thing relating to religion. Men, of a vain and superficial character, whose only knowledge of religion consists in the possession of a little more temerity than the illiterate and the vulgar; produce, as the whole of their learning, only trite and often repeated objections which they have learnt from others, but which they did not invent; objections frequently refuted, and which appear to exist only to do honour to the truth. Men of dissolute practice who have never devoted a single hour's serious attention, to the truths of religion, boldly resolve and decide upon points which a whole life of study, accompanied with erudition and piety, would scarcely suffice to elucidate.

Even persons in a sex, in which ignorance upon certain

* See Appendix, Note A.

points ought to be considered a merit, and respecting which politeness and decorum would, at least, wish them to appear ignorant—persons who are better acquainted with the world than with Jesus Christ—who do not even know enough of religion to regulate their conduct, start objections and wish to have them explained, fearing lest they should believe too much, entertaining doubts respecting every thing, and yet having none concerning their own misery and the visible inconsistency of their lives. It is thus, O God, that sinners are given up to the vanity of their minds, and that thou permittest those to remain ignorant of themselves, who will too closely pry into thy adorable secrets. Faith, therefore, you have just seen, is honourable to man. It remains to shew that it is necessary.

Part III.—The necessity of faith is the circumstance which renders the unbeliever the most inexcusable. Every other motive that we employ to bring him back to the truth, is, so to speak, foreign to him; but this is taken from himself—that is to say, from his reason.

Now, I say that revelation is absolutely necessary to guide man through the dark mazes of the present life, because his reason is weak, and must be assisted; it is diseased, and must be healed; it is variable, and must be fixed. Now, it is revelation alone that supplies the help necessary to assist and enlighten reason; it is the remedy that heals, and the curb or rule that restricts and determines its exercise. Allow me another moment's attention; I will not abuse the favour.

I say, in the first place, that reason is weak, and requires assistance. Alas! my brethren, we neither comprehend ourselves, nor the objects that surround us. We know not how we were formed, by what imperceptible gradations our bodies received arrangement and life, and what are the unnumbered springs and the Divine art which move the whole machine. 'I know not,' said that illustrious mother of the Maccabees formerly to her children, 'how you were

formed in my womb ; I neither gave you the breath, nor the life which you have received ; it was not I who arranged and set in order the wondrous structure of your members ; it was the invisible hand of Him who created the universe.' (2 Macc. vii. 22, 23.) Even our bodies are a mystery in the consideration of which the human mind is lost and confounded, and whose secrets we shall never thoroughly fathom : He alone, who presided at their formation, can fully comprehend them.

That breath of the Divinity which animates us—that portion of ourselves which renders us capable of love and knowledge—is equally unknown to us : we know not how its desires, fears, and hopes are originated, nor how it can give to itself its ideas and its images. No person has yet been able to comprehend how this spiritual existence, so different in its nature from matter, could have been united to our bodies by bonds so indissoluble, that these two subsistences should form only the same whole, and that the blessings and calamities of the one should become also those of the other. We are, therefore, a mystery to ourselves, said St. Augustin ; and even that vain curiosity which wishes to know every thing, we shall find it difficult to explain, or even to pronounce how it was first excited in our minds.

Without, we still find nothing but enigmas ; we live as strangers upon the earth, and in the midst of objects which we cannot comprehend. Nature is to man a sealed book ; and the Creator, for the purpose, it would seem, of confounding human pride, has spread darkness over the face of this abyss.

O man, lift up thine eyes ! consider those grand orbs of light which are suspended over thy head, and which float in that immense space where thy reason is lost and overwhelmed. "Who," said Job, "formed the sun, and gave names to the innumerable stars ? Explain, if thou canst, their nature, their use, their properties, their situations, their distances, their extraordinary phenomena, the regu-

larity or eccentricities of their motions. Our age has discovered something; it has made a little better conjecture than the ages which preceded us; but how little has it taught us in comparison with the things of which we still remain ignorant?

Descend now to the earth, and tell us, if thou canst, who confines the winds in their treasury—who regulates the course of the thunder bolt and of the hurricane—which is the fixed point that sets bounds to the impetuosity of the ocean-waves, and how its regular and wonderful motions are occasioned: explain to us the surprising properties of the plant, the mineral, and the elements; discover how the gold is purified in the bowels of the earth: unravel, if thou canst, the wondrous art which enters into the formation of the insect, which crawls beneath thy feet: assign a reason for the different instincts of animals: turn in all directions; nature, in every part, presents us only with enigmas. O man! thou understandest not the objects which are continually before thee, and how shouldest thou dive into the eternal depths of revelation? Nature is replete with mysteries, and wouldest thou a religion that has none? Thou knowest not the mind of man, and wouldest thou fathom the secrets of the Almighty? Thou art not acquainted with thyself, and wouldest thou that thy feeble mind should grasp that which is so much above thee? The universe, which God has left open to thy curiosity and inquiries, is an abyss in which thou art lost; yet thou wouldest that the mysteries of revelation, which he has presented only to thy docility and respect, should possess nothing beyond thy finite powers! Oh, madness! If every thing except religion were clear, thou mightest, with some appearance of reason, mistrust its obscurities; but since every external object is incomprehensible to thee, “the secret of God,” said St. Augustin, “ought to render thee more respectful and attentive—not more incredulous: *Secretum Dei intentos debet facere, non adversos.*”

The necessity of revelation is therefore founded, in the

first place, on the weakness of reason ; it is also founded on its deep degeneracy. And in truth, what was there more natural to man than the knowledge of his God, the Author of his being and felicity—his first cause and ultimate end—than to adore His wisdom, power, and goodness, and all the Divine perfections of which he has engraven such deep and conspicuous traits on his creation ? These perceptions were born with us. Retrace now those ages of darkness and superstition which preceded the Gospel, and see to what man had degraded his Creator—to what he has resembled his God : there was none among the creatures, however vile, which his impiety did not deify ; and man was the noblest divinity that man adored.

If from religion you pass to morality, all the principles of natural equity were effaced, and man no longer bore written in his heart the work of that law which nature had engraven therein. Plato, that wise philosopher, who, according to St. Augustin, approaches so very near to the truth, would annul the holy institution of marriage : and, permitting a brutal confusion among men, would confound the paternal names and rights, which nature itself has at all times the most respected, even among animals ; and thus present men to the earth uncertain of their origin, each coming into the world without parents, so to speak, and, consequently, without obligations, tenderness, affection, or humanity ; every one in a condition liable to become, without his being aware of it, an incestuous person, or a parricide.

Others announced to mankind that pleasure was the supreme good ; and whatever might have been the intention of the first author of that sect, it is certain that his disciples sought no other felicity than that of the brute : the most shameful disorders became maxims of philosophy. Rome, Athens, and Corinth witnessed excesses in which we seek in vain for any thing human in man. This is a small thing ; the most abominable vices were consecrated : they even erected to them temples and altars : lewdness, incest,

cruelty, perfidy, and crimes still more flagrant, were enshrined as divinities: their worship consisted of public debaucheries and prostitutions; and gods so unholy, were honoured only by the commission of crimes: and the Apostle, who relates these things, informs us that these were irregularities, not of the common people only, but of sages and philosophers, who became vain in their imaginations, and who were given up of God to vile affections. O God! in permitting human wisdom to fall into such monstrous errors, thou wouldest teach mankind that reason, left to its natural darkness, is capable of every excess, and cannot assume the guidance of itself, without falling into abysses from which it can be extricated only by thy light and thy truth.

Finally, if the degeneracy of reason makes us feel the need of a remedy to rectify it, its inconstancy and perpetual variations teach us likewise that it cannot do without a curb to restrain, and a rule to fix and regulate its exercise.

And here, my brethren, if the brevity of a single discourse allowed us to say every thing, what vain disputes, what endless controversies, and what different opinions have formerly divided the schools of Pagan philosophy! And do not suppose that they related to subjects which God seems to have left free to the discussions of men; they related to the nature of God himself, to his existence, to the immortality of the soul, and to the true felicity.

Some doubted every thing; others imagined that they knew every thing. Some insisted that there was no God; others presented us with one after their own mind; that is to say, an indolent spectator of human affairs, calmly abandoning to chance the government of His own work, as though it were a care unworthy of His greatness, and incompatible with His repose: some others, as a slave to fate, and subject to laws which He did not Himself impose: these, as incorporated with the whole universe, as though He were the soul of this vast body, and made a

part of a world which He himself created ; and what not ? For I do not pretend to declare every thing ; as the number of the schools, were the different sentiments upon this essential point. Every succeeding age introduced some new extravagances respecting the nature and immortality of the soul : *here*, it was a mere assemblage of atoms ; *there*, a subtle fire ; elsewhere an attenuated ether ; in another school, a portion of the Divinity. Some supposed that it died with the body ; others, that it existed before it : others, again, imagined that it passed from one body to another ; from man to a horse ; from the condition of a rational being to that of an animal destitute of reason. There were found some who taught that the true felicity of man was derived from the senses ; a still greater number placed it in reason ; others discovered it only in reputation and glory ; many in sloth and indolence. And that which is the most deplorable here, is this, that the existence and nature of God, the immortality of the soul, the end and felicity of man, all points so essentially bearing on his destiny—so intimately connected with his eternal misery, or happiness, were nevertheless become problems, which were every where discussed merely to amuse the leisure of the schools and the vanity of sophists : they were idle questions, in which they took a part—not for the sake of truth, but only for the glory of victory. It is thus, great God ! that thou sportest with human wisdom.

If from thence we descend to Christian ages, who can enumerate that infinite variety of sects, which have at all times broken the unity of the church to follow strange doctrines ? What were the abominations of the Gnostics, the extravagances of the Valentinians, the fanaticism of Montanus, the contradictions of the Manicheans ? Pursue the inquiry from age to age ; as there must needs be heresies for the trial of the just, you will find that every age has seen the church deplorably rent by them.

Recollect only the sad dissensions of the past age. Since the separation of our brethren, what a startling

variety do we find in their doctrine! what distinct assemblies in the same schism! That illustrious kingdom*, whose proximity, misfortunes, and sacred and august pledges† have rendered so dear to us, to how many different religious parties is it at this time a prey! By what numerous opinions and sects is that venerable church, formerly so fruitful in saints, now rent!‡ Each one is there a law and a judge to himself; and the reigning religion is, in fact, to have none. O revelation! O gift of God! O hallowed torch which came to enlighten a dark place, how necessary art thou to man! O infallible rule, descended from heaven, and given in trust to the spouse of Jesus Christ, the same in every age, always independent of place, of time, of nations, and of interests; how needful art thou as a restraint upon the eternal variations of the human mind! O pillar of fire, at once so obscure and so luminous, how important is it that thou shouldest conduct the camp of the Lord, the tabernacle, and the tents of Israel, through the perils of the wilderness, the snares, the temptations, and the dark and unknown paths of the present life!§

Now, my brethren, what instruction shall we draw from this discourse, and what can I add by way of conclusion? You say that you have faith—shew your faith by your works. What will it avail you to believe, if your conduct belie your belief? The Gospel is still more the religion of the heart than of the understanding. The faith which constitutes a Christian is not a mere submission of the reason, it consists in the pious affections of the soul, it is a continual desire to become like Jesus Christ, it is an indefatigable endeavour to destroy whatever is found in us opposed to the life of faith. There is an infidelity of heart, as dangerous to salvation, as that of the understanding.

* England.

† James II. king of England, and his queen, were then at St. Germain-en-Laye.

‡ See Note B, in Appendix.

§ See Note C, in Appendix.

A man who persists in unbelief, after all the evidences given to religion, is a monster that strikes us with horror; but a Christian who believes and yet lives as though he believed not, is a madman whose folly we cannot comprehend: one perishes as a desperado; the other as an indolent person who yields himself to the impetus of the current; and imagines that he can thus be saved. Render your faith certain therefore, my brethren, by your good works; and if you tremble even at the name of a profligate, have the same horror of yourselves, since revelation teaches us that the future destiny of the wicked professor of Christianity will in nothing differ from his, and that he will have the same portion with infidels. *Partem ejus cum infidelibus ponet.* Live, therefore, in conformity to what you believe. Such is the faith of the righteous, and to this faith alone have eternal promises been annexed. Amen.

SERMON II.

ON THE EVIDENCE OF THE LAW OF GOD.

JOHN viii. 46.

If I tell you the truth, why do ye not believe me?

HITHERTO Jesus Christ had, by His works and miracles confounded the unbelief of the Jews, this day He calls upon them to attend to the decisions of their own consciences, and to the evidence of the truth, which, in spite of themselves, bears testimony to His doctrine and ministry. But as they closed their eyes against the evidence of his miracles, by charging him with performing them by the ministry of demons; so they closed them likewise against the evidence of His doctrine and mission, so clearly predicted in the Scriptures, by pretending to discover therein such obscurities as rendered them doubtful and suspicious.

For, my brethren, however evident the truth, that is to say the law of God, is, either in our own hearts, in which it is written in such striking and indelible characters, or in the rules left to us by Jesus Christ, we always desire that our consciences may discern only that which our passions wish to see; or that those rules were not so plain, but that we might find some modifications, or interpretations in our favour. In the world, indeed, two pretexts are usually opposed to the most alarming truths of the Law of God. In the first place, many, in order to quiet their minds respecting a thousand corrupt practices which are commonly justified, tell us that they believe themselves safe in such a condition; that their consciences reproach them

with nothing therein ; but that if they were persuaded that there were evil in it, they would immediately leave their present course. Sincerity and a quiet conscience is therefore the first pretext opposed to the evidence of the law of God.

The second pretext that they oppose to us is, that the Gospel is not so clear and determinate upon certain points, as we affirm—that every one interprets it in his own way, and makes it speak as he pleases ; and that what appears so certain to us, does not appear so to every one. The obscurity and uncertainty of its rules are therefore the second pretext.

Now, I say, the law of God possesses a two-fold evidence, which will confound these two pretexts, and condemn, in the day of the Lord's vengeance, all the vain excuses of sinners.

First, It is evident in the conscience of the sinner : this is the first reflection. Secondly, It is evident in the simplicity of its rules ; this is the second reflection.—The evidence of the law of God in the consciences of men : this is the first character of the law of God, which will judge the vain security, and the pretended sincerity of worldly minds. The evidence of the law of God in the simplicity of its rules : this is the second character of the law of God, which will judge the affected uncertainties and false interpretations of sinners. And it is thus, O my God, that Thy holy law will judge the world ; and that the guilty conscience will one day be confounded before Thy tribunal, both by its own convictions and by the clearness of Thy celestial precepts.

Part I.—It is very surprising that most worldly minds allege sincerity and an easy conscience to excuse the corruptions and dangerous maxims of the world. Besides, the peace and security experienced in deceitful and wicked practices are rather their punishment than their excuse ; and though it were true, that their consciences did not

condemn any thing in their conduct while regulated according to the false opinion of the world, this would only render their state, as to their salvation, the more dangerous and hopeless : conscience appears to be the last tribunal to which an unfaithful soul ought to appeal : and it is of all things the most unfavourable to the errors of the sinner.

Some, I know, are so hardened that scarcely any rays of grace or light can compel them to open their eyes. They live without remorse and without inquietude in the horrors of a dreadful libertinism ; in them all remaining sensibility of conscience appears to be extinguished ; and they carry the excess of their wilful blindness so far, said St. Augustin, as even to glory therein. *De cæcitate ipsa gloriantium*. But these are rare and terrible examples of the justice of God ; and if there have been such upon the earth, they only prove to what a degree men may be rejected of God, and how far the power of his anger may proceed.

Yes, my brethren, whether we affect to rise in loud and unblushing defiance against the authority of the law, like the infidel and the libertine ; or whether we endeavour to soften and artfully to reconcile it with our passions, by favourable interpretations, like worldly minds and sinners in general ; our consciences bear a twofold testimony to that Divine law : a testimony of truth to the equity and necessity of its maxims, and a testimony of severity to the strictness of its rules.

I say, in the first place, it bears a testimony of truth to the equity of its maxims. For, my brethren, God is too wise not to approve of order ; and He is too good not to desire our welfare. His law must therefore be distinguished by two characters—equity and goodness : by equity, which regulates every duty—by goodness, which connects our repose and happiness in the present life with the rule itself and the practice of our duty.

Besides, we are inwardly convinced that its rules are just and reasonable—that the law of God commands nothing

which is inconsistent with the true interest of man ; that nothing is more becoming a rational creature than gentleness, humanity, temperance, modesty and the various virtues recommended in the Gospel ; that the passions forbidden by the law are the only source of our troubles ; that the more we deviate from the rule or law of God, the farther we, at the same time, depart from the peace and repose of our own minds ; and that the Lord, by forbidding us to give up ourselves to violent and vicious passions, has only forbidden us to yield up ourselves to our greatest tyrants ; and that He only desired to make us happy by making us obedient.

Such is the testimony which is borne to the law of God in our hearts. In vain are we led astray by the enchantments of sense ; in vain do we shake off the yoke of holy rules : we cannot succeed in justifying our disorders to ourselves : we always secretly espouse the interests of the law, in opposition to ourselves ; we always find within us an apology for the rules which condemn our sinful passions. We cannot corrupt this inward witness to the truth, which secretly espouses the cause of virtue ; we always feel a contrariety between our propensities and our convictions ; the law of God written in our hearts always opposes the law of the flesh which is foreign to man's original institution ; it maintains its truth in spite of ourselves, if it cannot its authority ; it acts the part of a censor, if it cannot serve as a rule ; in a word, it renders us miserable, if it cannot make us faithful.

Hence, it is in vain that we at times give up ourselves to all the bitterness of hatred and revenge : we soon feel that such cruel gratifications are not designed for man ; that to hate others is to punish ourselves ; and upon reflection, after the transports of passion have subsided, we find a principle of humanity within us, which condemns their violence ; which convinces us, that gentleness and benevolence were original propensities in our nature, and that in requiring us to love our brethren, the law of God has

only consulted the most just and rational feelings of our minds, and thereby reconciled us with ourselves. "You are more righteous than I," said Saul to David, when his hatred was at its greatest height. The benevolence natural to the human heart, extorted from him this confession, and he secretly condemned the injustice and cruelty of his revenge.

In vain do we rush into brutal and sensual indulgences, and madly seek all that can gratify our insatiable desire of pleasure; we soon perceive that irregularity carries us too far to be suited to our nature—that every thing which brings us into subjection, and tyrannises over us, subverts the order of our original state; and that the Gospel, by prohibiting voluptuous passions, has only provided for the tranquillity of our minds, and for the restoring to us all their eminence and dignity. "How many servants in my father's house," said the prodigal, still bound with the chains of a shameful vice, "are living in honour and abundance, while I languish in *ennui*, under the reproach and disgrace of my passion!" It was a remains of reason and of noble sentiment, whose whisper was still heard in the secret recesses of his heart.

Finally, examine the different precepts of the law of God, and you will perceive that they have a necessary relation to the heart of man—that they are rules founded upon a perfect acquaintance with human nature—that they contain the remedy of our most secret evils, and the aid necessary to our best propensities; and that it was only He who knew the secrets of the heart, who could prescribe such maxims to men. Those Pagans themselves, in whom the truth was not wholly extinguished, ascribed this honour to Christian morals. They were constrained to admire the wisdom of its precepts, the necessity of its prohibitions, the holiness of its counsels, the reasonableness and elevation of all its rules. They were surprised to find in the discourses of Jesus Christ a more sublime philosophy than in the schools of Rome and of Greece; and

they were at a loss to conceive how the Son of Mary should have understood the duties, the desires, and the secret propensities of the human heart better than Plato and his disciples.

Come and tell us after this, that nature is our first law, and that our natural propensities to pleasure cannot be criminal. I have repeatedly declared this to be an impiety that has no existence but in discourse: it is an ostentatious libertinism, in which vanity glories, but which truth secretly belies. Augustin, during his sinful state, tried every means to efface that remains of faith and conscience from his mind, which continued to recal him to the truth; he had eagerly sought, in the most impious opinions, and in the most monstrous errors, for something to justify himself in his crimes; his spirit fleeing from the light which pursued him, wandered from impiety to impiety, and from error to error: yet, in spite of all his efforts and of all his aberrations, the truth, ever victorious in his mind, caused its voice to be heard, and he could not succeed in deceiving and quieting himself in his disorders: "I bore, O my God," said he, "a distracted mind, that still bleeds from the sad wounds which my sinful passions incessantly inflicted. *Portabam conscissam et cruentam animam meam*: I was a burden to myself; I could no longer support my overwhelmed heart; I turned on every side, but it was never at ease; and I knew not where to repose it, to free myself from its oppressive weight, and to solace my inquietude: *Impatientem portari à me, et ubi eam ponerem non inveniebam.*"

Such is the testimony which a sinner, who added to the violence of his passions both impious opinions and abused light, bore concerning himself. And such examples are common in every age: even our own has seen celebrated and avowed sinners, who have made an awful boast that they did not believe the being of a God: they have been regarded as heroes of impiety and libertinism. We have seen them at length brought to repentance, like Augustin, and returning from their errors: we have heard them

acknowledge that they could not succeed in effacing the truth from their minds ; that, in the midst of their impiety and most dreadful excesses, their hearts, still inclined to Christianity, secretly belied their derisions and blasphemies ; that they boasted, in the presence of others, of a strength of mind which forsook them in secret ; that their professed incredulity concealed the most cruel remorse and the most distressing fears ; and that they were never firmly established and perfectly easy in their wickedness.

Yes, my brethren, wickedness, ever timid, carries every where with it, saith the Spirit of God, a sentence of condemnation against itself: *Cùm sit enim timida æquitas, dat testimonium condemnationis.* You every where pay homage, by your inward troubles and remorse, to the sanctity of the law which you violate ; a fund of weariness and grief, invariably connected with crimes, makes you continually feel that regularity and innocence are the only felicity which was appointed for you in the present life ; you, in vain, exhibit an affected intrepidity—a guilty conscience always betrays itself: *Semper enim præsumit sæva, perturbata conscientia.* Cruel terrors every where accompany you ; solitude troubles you ; darkness alarms you : you think you see phantoms come forth on every side to reproach you with the secret horrors of your minds ; dismal dreams fill you with dark and gloomy images: *Semper enim præsumit sæva, perturbata conscientia:* and the wickedness after which you so eagerly run, pursues you in its turn like a cruel vulture, and, fixing on you, tears your heart to pieces to punish you for the pleasure which it had itself conferred. How many resources, O my God, hast Thou left in our hearts to recal us to Thyself ! and how powerful an advocate does the beauty and justice of thy law find within us ! This is the first testimony which our consciences bear to the law of God—the testimony of truth to the sanctity of its maxims.

But they also bear a testimony of severity to the exactness of its rules. For a second illusion to most persons

who live exempt from great irregularities, but who, in other respects, live in the midst of pleasure, of every corruption, of every sensuality, and of every dissipation that the world authorizes, is to wish to persuade themselves that the Gospel requires no more; and to persuade us that their consciences do not reproach them with any thing, and that they believe themselves safe in such a course. Now, I say, that in this respect also, a worldly mind is destitute of sincerity, and mistakes one thing for another; and that, notwithstanding all those palliations which it attempts to justify to itself, it bears a secret testimony to the strictness of the law of God.

Indeed, my brethren, a regard to order requires that all our passions should be regulated by the restraints of the law: all our propensities, corrupted in their source, require a rule to rectify and amend them. We bear this testimony within ourselves; we perceive that our depravity diffuses itself over the smallest, as well as over the greatest, things; that self-love infects all our actions; and that in every thing we are weak, and continually opposed to order and duty. We perceive, therefore, that the rule ought not, in any respect, to be favourable to our inclinations, and that, in every thing, it ought to be severe, because it ought, in every thing, to be opposed to us; that the law cannot harmonize with our natural desires; that every thing which favours our inclinations, cannot be the remedy designed to cure them; that whatever flatters our desires, cannot be the curb which ought to restrain them: in a word, that every thing which cherishes self-love, is not the law which is established to destroy and annihilate its being. Hence, through a secret principle, and one inseparable from our being, we always distinguish between ourselves and the law—our inclinations and its rules—our pleasures and its duties; and in every doubtful case, in which we decide in favour of our sinful propensities, we plainly perceive that we depart from the law of God, which is always more severe than ourselves.

And permit me now, my brethren, to appeal to your consciences, which you plead as an excuse, and to which you continually refer us. Are you really so easy as you wish to persuade us that you are, in that life of pleasure, dissipation, indolence, or sensuality; in a word, in that worldly life, whose innocence you perpetually maintain? Have you yet succeeded in persuading yourselves that it is the way which leads to salvation? Do you not perceive that the Gospel requires more from you than what you perform? Should you be willing to appear before God, with nothing to present to Him but those pleasures and amusements which you denominate innocent, and which seem to compose nearly the whole career of your existence? I ask, whether, in those moments in which you are more sensibly affected with Divine grace, in which you propose to think seriously of eternity, you do not introduce into the new plan of life which you then form, the renouncing of most of those things in which you incessantly tell us that you discern no evil? When fully impressed with the importance of your salvation, do you not begin by saying to yourselves that you will renounce the excesses of gaming, of spectacles, and of vanity—the indecencies of dress, the dissipation of assemblies and of other pleasures—that you will devote more time to prayer, to retirement, to pious reading, and to the duties of religion? Now, what do you thereby say to yourselves, but that so long as you do not renounce all those evils, and devote more time to all these pious duties, you do not seriously think about your salvation—that you ought not to indulge the least hope of being saved, and that you are in the broad way to death and perdition.

But, besides, you who are so severe in your censures upon good men, recollect all the severity of your maxims and of your derisions of their conduct. Do you not blame, do you not daily censure, all who wish to unite those corrupt practices and amusements for which you incessantly apologize, with a public profession of piety; and

who wish to enjoy the reputation of virtue, without relinquishing any of the pleasures of the world? Do you not treat their piety as a chimera, and as hypocrisy? It is here that you triumphantly exhibit, in the harshest colours, all the austerities of the Christian life. Do you not say that it is necessary either entirely to renounce the world, or to continue to live like the world; and that all those doubtful virtues only serve to disgrace true virtue? I therein agree with you; but I reply—Your consciences tell you that it is not safe to give yourselves only half to God; and yet you would have us to believe that your consciences do not reproach you with any thing in a life in which God is in nothing regarded. You condemn those deluded souls which can be satisfied by a division, at least apparent, between the world and Jesus Christ; and yet you who have nothing to justify yourselves but the disorders of the world and its perilous practices, apologize for your conduct. Do you then think that the way of salvation is more austere for those who make a profession of piety than for you—that the world possesses privileges, in that respect, which you forfeit as soon as you wish to serve God? Be consistent then with yourselves; and either cease to condemn mere worldly virtue, or cease to justify the world itself; since all that you blame in virtue is only what the world still mingles with it of its own.

And to make you feel still more sensibly your want of sincerity in that respect, I observe, that you glory in incessantly repeating that we drive human weakness to despair—that to practise all which we teach in these Christian pulpits, it would be necessary to retire to the desert, or to be angels rather than men. Nevertheless, do honour to the force of truth: if a minister of the Gospel should bring a different doctrine to that which we teach; if he should come to announce the same maxims to you which you daily repeat in the world; if he should declare in this sanctuary of truth, that the Gospel is not so severe as it is pretended—that we may unite the love of the world with

the service of God—that there is no evil in games, amusements, and theatrical performances, excepting what we ourselves connect with them—that we must resemble the world while we live in it—that all that is said respecting crosses, repentance, mortification, and self-denial, is rather adapted to the cloisters, than to the court and to persons of rank; and finally, that God is too good to make a crime of a thousand things which have become customary, and of which we wish to make a scruple;—if, I say, he should come to proclaim these maxims in this sacred place, what would you think? What would you say of his new doctrine? What idea would you have of this new apostle? Would you regard him as one descended from Heaven to announce a new Gospel? Would you conclude that he were better instructed than we in the sacred truths of salvation, and in the rules of the Christian life? You would laugh at his ignorance or folly; you would perhaps be struck with horror at the profanation of his ministry.

What, my brethren! Do those maxims which would appear blasphemy and extravagance if announced to you from the foot of the altar, become rules of reason and wisdom when uttered by yourselves in your daily conversation? From the lips of a minister of the Gospel you would regard them as the discourses of a madman; and do they appear more solid and serious from your own? You would laugh, or rather be struck with horror at a preacher who should announce them to you; and yet you would wish to persuade us that you speak seriously and consistently with yourselves, when you so confidently maintain them.

Ah, my brethren, how insincere are we in the things of God; and how terrible will it be when He shall avenge, by the convictions of our own hearts, the honour of His holy law! Our evident enthusiasm in those worldly pursuits, whose innocence we so confidently maintain, arises from a secret persuasion that the world and its corrupt practices are the road to perdition. We openly justify what we se-

cretly condemn ; we are the hypocrites of the world and its pleasures ; and by a most deplorable destiny, our life is spent in disguising our character, and in resolving to perish in spite of ourselves. And verily, said an Apostle, if our hearts, notwithstanding all our self-complacency and our blindness to our faults, cannot even now prevent our secretly condemning ourselves, can we expect more indulgence from the sovereign and terrible Judge of hearts ? “ If our hearts condemn us, God is greater than our hearts, and knoweth all things.”

Study therefore, my brethren, the law of God in your own consciences, and you will perceive that it is not more favourable to your passions than we are ; consult the light in your own hearts, and you will perceive that it perfectly agrees with our precepts ; listen to the truth which raises its voice within your own breasts, and you will allow that we only repeat what it incessantly announces to you. In order to clear up most of your difficulties, you have no occasion, said St. Augustin, to consult the learned : seek not, from without yourselves, elucidations and answers ; go not to others to learn what you are required to do ; attend to the decisions of your own minds ; follow the first dictates of your own consciences, and you will always determine on the side the most conformable to the law of God. The first impression made upon the heart is always in favour of the strictness of the rule, in opposition to the mitigations of self-love ; your consciences will always go further and be more severe than we are ; and if you have need of our advice, it will rather be to moderate their severity, than to rectify their false indulgence : *Noli, foràs ire ; in te ipsum redi : in interiore homine habitat veritas.*

This is, my brethren, the first method by which the law of God will one day judge us : this law, manifested in the conscience of the sinner, and as it were born with him, will rise up against him ; our hearts, stamped with the seal of truth, will be the witnesses which will depose against us : our light will be opposed to our actions, our remorse to

our conduct, our discourses to our thoughts, our inward sentiments to our public proceedings, ourselves to ourselves. Hence, we each bear our condemnation within our own breasts : the Lord will derive from ourselves the heads and particulars of the process, which will decide our eternal reprobation ; and the soul before the tribunal of God, said Tertullian, will be at the same time, both the condemned criminal and the witness that will testify against his crimes : *Merito igitur omnis anima stabit ante aulas Dei, et rea et testis; in tantum et rea erroris, in quantum est testis veritatis.* He will have nothing to answer, continues that Father : *nihil habens dicere.* You knew the truth, will it be said to him, and you held it in unrighteousness ; you admitted the happiness of those who sought God, yet did not seek him yourself : *Deum predicabas, et non requirebas.* You drew frightful pictures of the world, of its ennui, of its perfidy, and of its injustice ; and yet were always its slaves and its admirers : *Damonia abominabaris et illa adorabas.* You inwardly respected the religion of your ancestors, and yet gloried in impiety ; you secretly feared the judgments of God, and yet pretended that you did not believe in Him : *Judicium Dei appellabas, necesse credebas.* You secretly justified the piety of the good ; you purposed one day to resemble them ; yet you wounded and persecuted them by your derisions and censures : *Christianum nomen sapiebas, et Christianum persequeris.* In a word, your convictions have always sided with God, and your actions with the world.

To what lengths, O my God ! do not men carry their ingratitude and folly ? Thou hast implanted within us a light inseparable from our being, which by disturbing the false peace of our sinful passions and errors, is continually recalling us to order and truth ; and, deluded by our vanity, we value ourselves upon being easy in our wanderings ; we glory in a peace which thy mercy would still disturb : and instead of proclaiming the riches of Thy grace towards our souls, which still leaves us susceptible of truth, we boast

of a blindness and obduracy, which will, sooner or later, become real, and be the just punishment of that ingratitude and dissimulation so insulting to Thy grace. This is the first distinguishing characteristic of the evidence of the law of God : it is evident in the conscience of the sinner ; and it is equally so in the simplicity of its rules.

Part II.—Since man is the work of God, he ought only to live conformably to the will of his Maker ; and since God formed man, His most perfect work, He could not leave him upon the earth to wander in uncertainty without revealing to him His will ; that is to say, without prescribing to him his duty to his Creator, to his fellow-creatures, and to himself. Besides, when He took him from the dust, He implanted within him a clear light which was ever present to his mind and determined all his duty. But all flesh having corrupted its way, and the iniquity generally prevalent upon the earth, not having been able altogether to obscure this internal light in the hearts of men, though it no longer suffered them to enter into themselves and to consult it, appeared to maintain itself within them only to render them more inexcusable : God, whose mercy appeared to become the more abundant in proportion as the wickedness of men increased, was pleased to engrave that law of nature upon tables of stone, which He had previously written in our hearts ; He placed before our eyes, the law which we bear within us, that it might awaken us to a sense of our obligations. But, the people who were appointed its first guardians, having again disfigured it by those interpretations which corrupt its purity, Jesus Christ, the Wisdom and Light of God, at length came upon the earth to restore its original beauty—to purify it from the corruptions of the synagogues—to dispel the darkness which a false science and human traditions had spread over it : and by unfolding all its sublimity, by applying its rules to all our wants, and by committing to us His Gospel, to leave no longer any excuse

ON THE EVIDENCE

is the ignorance or to the malice of those who
its precepts.
is the second pretext which our opponents allege
the evidence of the law of God, is the pretended
continuity of its rules: they charge us with making the
 Gospel speak whatever we desire; they cavil upon every
point; they find an answer to every argument; they spread
darkness over every thing; and they so obscure the law,
that even the most worldly would pretend to have the Gospel
on their side.

Now I contend that besides the evidence of conscience,
the law of God is also evident in the simplicity of its
rules; and hence sinners, who wish in this way to justify
their wicked ways, will one day be confounded, both by
the testimony of their own hearts and by the evidence of
the sacred rules.

Yes, my brethren, "the law of God," saith the prophet,
"is luminous, and enlighteneth the eyes even of those
who wish to disguise it to themselves" (Ps. xix. 8). *Præ-*
ceptum Domini lucidum, illuminans oculos. Jesus Christ
by coming Himself to give us a law of life and truth to
regulate our conduct, and in which the evidence could not
be too strong, certainly did not wish to leave such obscu-
rities therein as might mislead us, and favour those passions
which He came to oppose. Human laws may be subject
to these inconveniences; as the mind of man which devised
them could not foresee, or provide against all the difficul-
ties which might in future arise in the minds of others
concerning the force of the expressions, or even concern-
ing the nature of the rules themselves. But the Spirit
of God, the Author of the holy rules proposed in the
Gospel, foresaw all the objections which the mind of man
could oppose to His law: He read in the hearts of all suc-
ceeding generations the obscurity which their corruptions
would spread over the import of His sacred rules: He,
therefore, contrived them in so Divine and intelligible,
so simple and sublime a manner, that the most illiterate

as well as the most learned, could not mistake His will, or the way to eternal life.

It is true that in the Gospel a sacred obscurity conceals the incomprehensible mysteries of faith ; but its moral precepts are express and determinate : our duties are evident, and nothing is more clear and unequivocal than the precepts of Jesus Christ. And indeed it was quite necessary that they should be clear and intelligible, since they were at first announced only to the illiterate disciples and villagers of Judea ; and as the Sermon on the Mount, in which the whole moral law is summed up in so sublime and heavenly a manner, had for its auditors only the poor which had followed Jesus Christ from the wilderness.

Not, my brethren, but there may arise doubts and difficulties respecting particular obligations ; not but the connexion of a thousand different circumstances may sometimes so obscure the rule, that its meaning may escape the most discerning : neither do we mean to say, that every thing is so determinate in the Gospel, that we may not, in a variety of different states and conditions, frequently mistake.

But I say, in the first place—and I beg you to pursue these reflections, which appear to me to be of great consequence, and to include every rule relating to morals—that if, in particular duties, the letter of the law is sometimes doubtful, the spirit of it is scarcely ever so ; we always clearly perceive to which side the Gospel inclines, and whither the analogy and general spirit of its maxims conduct us. I say they throw light upon each other ; they all tend to the same end : they are like numerous lights which unite in one focus, forming so great a light that we can no longer mistake them ; there are certain general rules which serve to solve every particular duty : and finally, that if the law sometimes appears to us of doubtful meaning, the intention of the Lawgiver, by which we ought to interpret it, never leaves any room to doubt or mistake.

Thus, for instance, you, who live at court, where ambition is, as it were, the virtue of persons of your rank, would know whether it is criminal eagerly to desire the honours and prosperity of the world, to be always discontented with your situation, to be continually longing for promotion, and to refer to this end all your views, proceedings, and cares, even the whole course of your life. In reply you are told, that where your treasure is there your hearts ought to be also; that is to say, in the desire and hope of eternal blessings; and that the Christian is not of this world. Resolve this difficulty yourselves.

You inquire, whether the perpetual games, amusements, theatricals, and various other pleasures deemed innocent by the world, ought to be banished from the Christian's walk. You are answered, "Happy are they that weep; and woe to them that now laugh, and receive their consolation" in this world. Pursue the spirit of this law, and see where it will conduct you.

You desire to know whether, having to live in the world, you ought not to live like it; whether, seeing most men live like you, we would condemn them all; and whether, in order to serve God, it is necessary to affect a singularity which exposes you to ridicule in the eyes of others. In answer thereto you are told, that we must not be conformed to this evil world; that we cannot please men and be the servants of Jesus Christ; and that the multitude is always the party of the reprobate. It is for you to inform us whether the answer is not determinate.

You doubt whether, having forgiven your enemy, you are still bound to cultivate a friendly intercourse with him, to serve and to assist him with your property and credit; and whether it is not more just to reserve your favours and preferences for your friends. You are there answered, Load those with blessings who wish to injure you; speak well of those who calumniate you; love them that hate you. Enter into the spirit of these precepts, and

tell us whether it does not cast a light upon the inquiry, which in an instant clears up and dissipates your doubts.

Finally. Propose as many doubts concerning different duties as you please, it will be easy for you to decide respecting them all by the spirit of the law, though the letter should be silent; "for the letter killeth," saith the Apostle; that is to say, to stop there, to consider nothing as a duty but what is expressly mentioned, to stop at such gross limits, and not to enter more intimately into the interior and spirit which quickeneth, is to be a Jew, and to deceive yourself. No more say to us, my brethren, when we condemn the many corrupt practices in which you do not scruple to indulge, "But the Gospel is silent on these things." The Gospel explains every thing to him who wishes to understand it; the Gospel leaves nothing undetermined to him who loves the law of God; the Gospel resolves every difficulty to him who seeks only to be instructed: it even goes further, and without stopping to settle certain particulars, it regulates the passions themselves; without particularizing every action, it represses the propensities from which they proceed; and without confining itself to certain exterior circumstances of conduct, it proposes, for the rule of our duty, the denying of ourselves, the hatred of the world, the love of suffering, the contempt of every thing transient, and the practice of these mortifying maxims in all their extent.

I say, in the second place, that it is not the obscurity of the law, but the passions, still dear to us, which occasion all our doubts respecting our various duties; that it is worldly minds which find the greatest difficulties and obscurities in moral rules; and that nothing appears clear to those who desire nothing should be so; that every thing appears doubtful to those who are interested in such uncertainties. I say, with St. Augustin, that a mind well inclined can alone enable us to understand the Divine precepts; that we never clearly comprehend rules and duties till we love them; that it is only through love that we

enter into the truth ; and that the sincere desire of salvation is the best solution of every difficulty : I say, that sincere and fervidly devout minds have rarely any thing to object to the law of God ; and that their doubts partake more of the nature of pious fears respecting certain holy practices, than of excuses and difficulties to justify profane ones.

Men have only learnt to entertain doubts respecting moral rules, since they have wished to reconcile them with their sinful passions. Primitive believers scarcely found any thing undecided : we do not perceive that the first pastors of the church had, in those happy ages, many difficulties to solve respecting the detail of duty : those immense volumes which decide cases of conscience, by such an infinite variety of solutions, only made their appearance with the corruption of manners : in proportion as believers had more sinful passions to satisfy, they had more doubts to propose ; it was necessary to enlarge the volumes to solve the difficulties which lust alone had occasioned—difficulties which were already solved in the Gospel, and respecting which the first ages of the faith would have been offended if they had even dared to entertain a doubt. Our age, still more dissolute, alas ! than those which have preceded us, has seen those monstrous collections of cases of conscience, and their solutions greatly increased and multiplied almost infinitely : all the most incontrovertible precepts of Christ are there become mere problems ; there is no duty respecting which the depravity of men has not found some difficulty to propose, and to which a false science has not found mitigations : every thing has been agitated, contested, brought into doubt ; we have seen the spirit of man offer despite to the Spirit of God, and substitute human doctrines in the place of those which Jesus Christ brought to us from heaven ; and though we do not pretend to blame all those pious and skilful men, who have left us laborious compilations ; it is much to be desired that the church had dispensed with

their aid; and we cannot but regard them as remedies which are themselves become disorders, and the sad consequence of the necessity of the times, of the corruption of manners, and of the decline of the truth among men.

Doubts, therefore, respecting our various duties arise from the depravity of our hearts much more frequently than from the obscurity of the rules. The light of the law, said St. Augustin, resembles that of the sun: but to a blind man it shines, glitters, and dazzles in vain; he is never struck with it. Now, every sinner is such a blind man; the light is near him, it surrounds and penetrates his inmost soul; but he remains destitute of light: *Præsens est illi, sed cum cæco præsens est*. Purify your hearts, continues that father, rend from them the fatal veil which is formed by your sinful passions; you will then clearly discern your duty, and your doubts will all quickly vanish away; *Removeantur iniquitates; sanetur quod saucium est; levetur pondus ab oculo; præceptum Domini lucidum*. Thus we daily see that when a person, touched by Divine grace, begins to think seriously of eternity, his eyes open upon a thousand truths which he had, till then, disguised to himself: by degrees, as his sinful passions are weakened, his knowledge increases; he is surprised that he could so long conceal from himself the duties which now appear to him so evident and incontrovertible: so that a sacred guide, instead of having occasion to enforce and support the authority of the law of God, in opposition to him, is necessitated prudently to conceal from the awakened person, the full extent and terror of sacred truth—to calm his mind respecting the horrors of his past disorders, and to abate the consternation into which he is thrown by the novelty and surprise of the light which he has received. The rule does not therefore become more clear, but the mind is disengaged and freed from its darkness; the law of God does not become more evident, but the eyes of the understanding are open to its brightness: in a word, it is not the Gospel, but the sinner, that undergoes a change.

And a new proof of what I advance, my brethren, is this, that respecting every precept of the law, in which we are not blinded by any particular passion or interest, we are keen-sighted and equitable. A covetous person, who conceals from himself the rules of revelation respecting an insatiable desire of riches, clearly discerns the maxims which condemn ambition and voluptuousness. A voluptuary, who endeavours to justify to himself the meanness of his propensities, allows no favour to the base inclinations and sordid attachments of avarice. A man obstinately set upon the pursuit of elevation and fortune, who regards the steps which he is continually obliged to take to obtain them, as serious and important cares, and as alone worthy of his birth and name, perceives all the disgrace attached to a life of amusement and pleasure, and clearly understands that a man born with a title, degrades and dishonours himself by indolence and inactivity. A woman seized with a passion for gambling, but in other respects regular, feels no pity towards those guilty of the slightest faults which affect their character; while she constantly justifies the innocence of an hazardous game, by contrasting it with the disorders of another kind from which she finds herself happily exempt. Another, on the contrary, elated with a conceit of her person and beauty, wholly occupied with her mean and degrading passions, regards that fury for incessant gaming, as a species of mental malady or delirium, and perceives in her own enormities only an innocent weakness, and involuntary propensities to which our hearts are naturally disposed.

Review all the sinful passions, and you will perceive that in proportion as we are exempt from any one, we discover and condemn it in others; we are acquainted with the rules which forbid it; we enforce upon others with rigorous exactness, the duties which do not relate to our own weakness, and become even more severe than the law. The Pharisees, who were so enlightened and severe upon the crime of the woman taken in adultery, and respecting the

punishment assigned by the law to this horrible infidelity, did not perceive their own pride, hypocrisy, implacable hatred, and secret envy towards Jesus Christ. The darkness therefore exists only in our own hearts ; and we only begin to entertain doubts respecting our various duties, when we begin to love the maxims which oppose them. This is the second reflection.

I observe further, in the third place : You believe that the Gospel is not so precise, as we pretend, respecting most of the duties that we wish to prescribe—that we go beyond its severity, and make it speak what we please. Listen to it therefore, my brethren ; we consent that of all the duties which it prescribes, you should believe yourselves bound to observe only those which are set forth in such clear and precise terms, that you cannot mistake, or misunderstand them : we demand no more from you, and we release you from obligation to all the rest. Listen to it therefore : “ Whosoever doth not daily take up his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple. Whosoever doth not, at least in heart, forsake all that he hath, and daily deny himself, cannot expect any thing from my promises. The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and it is only those who take it by force who shall one day attain to its enjoyment. Except ye repent, ye shall all perish. You cannot serve God and the world. Woe to those who now rejoice and are full ; and happy are they who weep and suffer hunger. Whosoever loveth his father, his wife, his children, his property, his body, his life, more than me, is not worthy of me. The world shall rejoice ; but you, my disciples, shall lament, and be sorrowful.”

Is it I who speak here, my brethren ? Do I come to deceive you with an excess of severity, to add new rigours to the Gospel, or to bring you my own sentiments ? Ah, feeble as I am, I myself require indulgence ; and if I derived the doctrines which I announce, from the weakness of my own heart, I should, alas ! speak to you only

the language of man. I should tell you that God is too good to punish propensities which were formed with our nature—that to love God it is not necessary to be the enemy of ourselves—that when we possess property, we should enjoy it, and deny ourselves no indulgence. Such is the language which I should hold ; for man left to himself can only speak this carnal language : but, I ask again, my brethren, would you believe me ; would you respect my ministry ; would you regard me as an angel come from heaven to announce another Gospel ?

The Gospel of Jesus Christ has just held a different language : I have only set before you His sacred word ; the duties which He has prescribed to you in clear and precise terms. We consent that you should restrict all your piety to their observance, and that you should leave every thing else as doubtful, or at least as commanded in terms less clear, and more susceptible of favourable interpretations. Reckon among your duties, only those holy and undisputed rules ; we require no more : confine your practice to what it prescribes, and you will perceive that you will then perform even more than we command you, and that the most common and familiar maxims of the Gospel go infinitely further than we do in our discourse. This is the third reflection.

I add, in the fourth place, that if almost every thing is disputed in the world, even respecting the most acknowledged duties of the Christian religion, it is because the Gospel is a book totally unknown to most believers : because, through a lamentable abuse, we pass our whole life in acquiring vain and trifling knowledge, of no avail either to our present or to our eternal felicity ; while we neglect the book of the law which contains the knowledge of salvation, the truth which must deliver us, the light which must direct us ; the title to our highest hopes, the pledge of our immortality, the consolation of our exile, and the support of our pilgrimage : it is because, on entering into the world, care is taken to present us with the books which

explain the rules of that profession to which we are destined, while the book containing the rules of the Christian profession—the profession that will survive every other, the only one really necessary, and that will follow us into eternity, is forgotten and never makes a part of the course of study which ought to employ our early years: finally, it is because fabulous and licentious histories vainly amuse our leisure, while the history of the wonderful works of God and of his mercy towards men—a history filled with such great, serious, and interesting events, and the sole consolation of our life, does not appear even worthy of our curiosity.

I am not astonished after this that we have daily occasion to vindicate the Gospel, from the errors and prejudices of the world—that it listens to us with the same surprise when we announce the most common truths of Christian morals, as when we set forth the faith and mysteries of those savage and distant nations, whose countries and manners are almost unknown to us: and if the doctrine of Jesus Christ this day finds the same contradiction in the minds of men, as it found at the first propagation of the faith, it is because there are Christians to whom the Gospel is almost as unknown as it then was to the Pagans—Christians who scarcely know whether Jesus Christ is come to deliver laws to men, and who cannot for a single moment peruse, without weariness, that sacred book which contains rules so sublime, promises so consoling, and whose beauty and Divine philosophy even Pagans, who embraced the faith, so greatly admired. Peruse therefore, my brethren, these sacred books; and read them with that spirit of faith, submission, and dependence which the church requires, and you will soon know as much respecting your duties and the rules of morality, as the Doctors who instruct you: *Super omnes docentes me intellexi; quia testimonia tua meditatio mea est.*

And in truth, my brethren, whence is it, I pray you, that the primitive believers carried the purity of morals and the holiness of Christianity so far? Were the maxims

inculcated upon them different from those which we announce to you? Was the Gospel preached to them more clear and well-defined than that which we set forth to you? Yet they were idolatrous and dissolute nations, which brought to the truths of revelation minds armed with all the prejudices of superstition, and of the most infamous pleasures, authorized even by their worship. If the Gospel contained the least obscurities favourable to the passions, it was doubtless those primitive disciples of the faith who would have mistaken them. How came it to pass, then, that they did not propose to the Apostles and to their successors, the same difficulties as you incessantly oppose to us, in order to vindicate the corrupt practices of the world, and the interests of sinful passions? Whence came it to pass, that with stronger propensities to pleasures and greater prejudices than we in their favour, those happy believers then understood how far obedience to the Gospel required their renouncing them?

Ah! it was because they had the book of the law day and night in their hands: it was because "patience and comfort of the Scriptures" were the sweetest exercise of their faith: the Epistles of the holy Apostles, and the recital of the life and maxims of Jesus Christ, were the sole bond and the daily conversation of those rising churches: it is, in a word, because with him who studies the Gospel every question which relates to his duty is soon decided. This is the fourth reflection.

Finally: I add, in the last place, though there should be found something obscure in the law of God, does it not receive the fullest evidence from the public ministry of the word, and from other means of instruction? Christian pulpits daily set forth the purity of holy maxims; pastors preach them upon the house tops; the sacred guides of conscience commit them in confidence to the ear; men of great zeal and knowledge transmit them to their posterity, in works worthy of better ages of the church: never were greater aids to piety afforded to believers; never was ignorance left more inexcusable; never was any age more en-

lightened, and better acquainted with the spirituality of revelation, and with the whole extent of our duty. We do not live in those illiterate ages, in which the rules existed only in connexion with the errors which corrupted them; in which the ministry was often an occasion of error and of stumbling to believers, and in which the priest passed for enlightened when he was more superstitious than his people.

In order to render us the more inexcusable, it would appear, O my God, that in proportion as the malice of men increased on the one hand, the knowledge of the truth, which was to condemn them, increased on the other; that, by degrees, as the morals of men became corrupt, the sense of the rules was more fully unfolded; by degrees, as the faith was weakened and extinguished in men, the more the doctrines of faith became clear and unclouded, like the fires which throw out a greater light as they expire, and never display their strength and glory to more advantage than when they are on the point of extinction.

Not but there are blind guides and prophets among us, who announce their own dreams; but the snare need not be feared, except by those who are willing to be deceived: when we sincerely wish to return to God, we soon find a hand ready to conduct us to Him: it is not false guides, therefore, who mislead us; but we seek for such guides, because we desire to wander with them; they are not the authors of our ruin, they are only the approvers of it; they do not lead us into the path of destruction, they only leave us in it; and we are bent on our own ruin as soon as we seek their countenance. Indeed, we are ourselves sensible of the danger and imprudence of our choice: the more compliant indeed the oracle, the more we distrust his communications: the more he respects our sinful passions, the less we respect his ministry; we even make it the frequent subject of our derision; we turn into ridicule the indulgences which we have sought; we boast that we

have found a convenient protector of human frailties ; and by a blindness of which we can speak only with tears, we confide our souls and our eternal salvation to a man that we do not think worthy of respect, or even of attention and regard, like those Israelites, who, after bowing the knee before the golden calf, and looking to it for salvation and deliverance, broke it insultingly to pieces, and reduced it to powder*.

But, after all, though the ignorance or the weakness of ministers should prove an occasion of error, the example of the saints undeceives you. You see which has, from the beginning, been the way of those who obtained promises, and whose memory and holy labours are venerated upon the earth : you see that none among them saved themselves by the way which the world glories in as so innocent and secure : you see that all the saints have repented, have crucified the flesh, have despised the world with its pleasures and maxims : you perceive that ages, differing so much the one from the other in their customs and manners, never altered any thing in the practices of the righteous—that the saints of the primitive ages were formed like those of the last—that even nations the most dissimilar in their tempers and habits, have produced saints who have resembled each other—that those of climes the most distant and the most unlike, have resembled those of our own nation—that in every tongue, and in every tribe, they have been the same—that, in short, their situations were different—that some saved themselves in obscurity, others in elevation ; some in poverty, others in plenty ; some amidst the dissipation attending exalted dignities and public cares, others in the silence and repose of solitude ; in a word, some upon the dunghill, others upon the throne ; but the cross, persecution, and self-denial were common to them all.

Thus, in every age and country, religious princes, holy

* See Note D, in Appendix.

conquerors, devout courtiers, Christian magistrates; retired virgins; married women, whose time was divided between the service of Jesus Christ and domestic cares; solitary penitents; priests, devoted to the sacred altar; masters and slaves sanctified themselves, and at present enjoy a happy immortality.

Who are you, then, that you should expect to go to heaven by a different way, and that you should flatter yourselves that among this crowd of illustrious servants of the living God, you alone should be peculiarly privileged? With what glory, O my God! hast thou not encompassed the truth, to render man inexcusable! His conscience discovers it to him; thy holy law preserves it; the voice of the church causes it to resound in his ears; the example of the saints places it incessantly before his eyes; every thing appears armed against his crimes; every thing espouses the interest of Thy law in opposition to his false security: rays of light break forth on every side, and flash conviction of the truth even to his inmost soul; no place, no situation can secure him from those Divine sparks which beam forth from Thee,—which every where follow him,—and which, by enlightening, torment him; the truth which might have delivered him, renders him unhappy; and, being unwilling to love the light, he is forced to feel, as it were, before the time, its righteous severity.

What forbids, then, my dear hearer, that the truth should triumph in thy heart? Why dost thou convert into an eternal source of bitter remorse that light which ought to be thine inward consolation in every trouble? Since, through a succession of the riches of Divine mercy towards thy soul, thou canst not succeed, like many impious and hardened sinners, in suppressing that inward light which incessantly recalls thee to regularity and duty; why dost thou struggle against that happiness which thy destiny places within thy reach? Why so many efforts to defend thyself against thine own conscience—so many expedients and subterfuges to flee from thyself? At

length reconcile thy heart with thy light; thy conscience with thy conduct; thyself with the law of God : this is the only secret to attain that peace of mind which thou seekest. Turn on every side for satisfaction, thou must at length come to this decision. The observance of the law of God is the true felicity of man. To regard it as a yoke, is to deceive ourselves; it is the law of God alone which brings the soul into a state of freedom. Every thing which favours our sinful passions adds poignancy to our griefs; augments our troubles; multiplies our bonds; and embitters our servitude; the law of God alone, by repressing them, brings us to a state of order; calms, cures, and delivers us. Such is the fate of sinful man, that he can only be happy in the present life by combating his passions: it is only by violence that he can arrive at the best pleasures of the soul; and, finally, at that eternal rest which is prepared for those who have loved the law of the Lord. Amen.

SERMON III.

ON THE DIVINITY OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

LUKE ii. 21.

He was named Jesus, which was the name which the angel had given him.

A GOD humbling himself to become man, astonishes and overwhelms human reason ; and in what a chaos of error does it not bewilder itself, if the light of Divine revelation come not speedily to its aid, and discover the depths of Divine wisdom, hidden under the apparent folly of the mystery of the God-man. Hence, this fundamental point of our holy religion, I mean the Divinity of Jesus Christ, has been at all times a subject the most exposed to the foolish contradictions of the human mind. Proud men, whose mouths ought to have been filled with thanksgivings for the unspeakable gift which the Father of mercies has made of his only Son, have not ceased to insult him, by breathing forth the most impious blasphemies against his adorable Son. Blind creatures, who have not perceived that the very name Jesus which is given to him as on this day—that name which He then first received in heaven, and which an angel announced upon earth to Mary and Joseph, is itself an incontestable proof of his Divinity. That sacred name established him the Saviour of the human race—a Saviour, as, by the shedding of his blood which becomes our ransom, He delivers us from sin, and its inseparable consequences, the tyranny of the devil and of hell—a Saviour, inasmuch as, by his drawing upon himself the punishment due to our transgressions, He reconciles us

to God, and opens to us anew an entrance to the eternal sanctuary which sin had closed against us. But, my brethren, if the Son of Mary be no more than a mere man, of what value, in the sight of God, would be the oblation of his blood? If Jesus Christ be not God, how can his mediation be accepted, seeing He himself would require a mediator in order to his own reconciliation with God?

This proof at which I here only glance, and numerous others, with which religion furnishes me, would soon stop the mouth of the infidel, and confound his impiety, if I should undertake to display them in all their evidence, and extent. But God forbid that I should come into this sacred temple, where the altars of our Divine Saviour are erected, where his worshippers assemble, to enter into disputes, as if I spake before his enemies; or to attempt the vindication of the mystery of the God-man, before a faithful people, and in the presence of a Sovereign whose most cherished and august title is that of a Christian. It is not therefore to oppose such infidels, that I this day consecrate my discourse to the Divinity and eternal glory of Jesus, the Son of the living God. I only come to console our faith by recounting the wonders which relate to him who is the author and finisher of it, and to rekindle our piety, by setting forth the glory and Divinity of the Mediator, who is its object and its sweetest hope.

It is also proper from time to time to revive these great truths in the minds of the great, and of the princes of the people, in order to fortify them against the infidel discourses with which they are usually but too much surrounded, and to withdraw the veil which conceals the holy sanctuary, in order to set before their eyes those hidden beauties, which religion proposes only to their respect and homage.

Now, the Divinity of the Mediator, can only be proved by his ministry; his titles can only be manifested in his offices: and to know whether He is descended from heaven and equal to the Most High, we need only relate what He

came to perform upon the earth. He came, my brethren, to form a holy and believing people; a believing people, who submit their reason to the sacred yoke of faith; a holy people, whose conversation is in heaven, and who are no longer debtors to the flesh to live after the flesh: this is the great design of his mission to our world.

The glory of his ministry, is the most immoveable foundation of our faith; the spirit of his ministry, the sole rule of our conduct. Now, if He were only a man sent of God, the glory of his ministry would become the inevitable occasion of our superstition and of our idolatry; the spirit of his ministry would be the fatal snare to our innocence. Hence, whether we consider the glory or the spirit of his ministry, the glory of his Divinity remains equally and invincibly established.

O Jesus, sole Lord of all, accept this public homage of our profession and of our faith! While infidelity, in secrecy and darkness, blasphemes thy glory, leave us the consolation to publish it with the voice of all ages, before these altars; and form in our hearts, that faith which not only confesses and adores, but which likewise follows and imitates Thee!

Part I.—God can manifest himself to men, only to teach them what he is, and what they owe to him; and religion is, strictly speaking, only a Divine light, which reveals God to mankind, and which fixes the duty of man towards his Maker. Whether the Most High, therefore, personally appears upon the earth, or whether He fills eminent men with his Spirit, the design of all these proceedings can only be the making known, and the sanctifying of his Name in the world, and the establishment of a worship which ascribes to him alone that which is due only to him.

Now, if the Lord Jesus, who came in the fulness of time, were merely an innocent and a righteous man, chosen as an envoy from God to the earth; the principal end of

his ministry would have been to lead the world to idolatry, and to rob the Divine Being of his glory, in order to ascribe it to himself.

And in truth, my brethren, whether we consider the glory of his ministry in that pompous display of prophecies and figures which preceded it, in the marvellous circumstances which accompanied it, or finally in the works which He himself performed ; the glory is such, that if Jesus Christ were only a man like ourselves, God himself, who sent him into the world, invested with such glory and power, must have deceived us, and have been guilty of the idolatry of those who adore him.

The first striking character of the ministry of Jesus Christ is this : it was predicted and promised to men from the foundation of the world. Scarcely had Adam fallen, than there was given to him a distant view of the Restorer whom his fall had rendered necessary to the world. In the following ages, God appears as if wholly occupied in preparing men for his arrival : if He manifest himself to the patriarchs, it is to confirm them in the expectation of his coming ; if He inspire prophets, it is to announce him ; if He choose a people, it is to make them the guardians of that great promise ; if He prescribe sacrifices and religious ceremonies, it is to shadow out before hand the history of him who is to come. All the events which took place upon the earth, seemed but an introduction to this great event : empires and kingdoms rose, or fell, only to prepare his way : the heavens were opened only to promise him ; and all nature seemed, as saith Paul, impatient to bring forth that Just One, whom it carried in its womb, and who was to deliver it from the curse under which it had fallen : *Omnis creatura ingemiscit et parturit* (Rom. viii.22).

Now, my brethren, for God to cause a man to be expected upon the earth, and to be announced from the height of heaven, from the beginning of time, is sufficient to lead men to receive him with a religious respect and adoration ; and even though Jesus Christ had only had

that particular glory which distinguished him from every other person, the superstition of the people, with respect to him, might have been feared, if He had been no more than a created being. But to have been predicted is a mere nothing as it respects Jesus Christ: all the particulars in which he was so are still more wonderful and astonishing than the predictions themselves. If, my brethren, Cyrus and John the Baptist were foretold long before their birth, in the prophecies of Isaiah and Malachi; they were so only in single predictions, without attendants or pomp, and only in a single prophet; predictions which announced particular events, and by which the piety of the people could not be misled; Cyrus to be the restorer of the walls of Jerusalem, John the Baptist to prepare the way before Him who was to come; both the one and the other to confirm, by the fulfilment of these particular prophecies, the truth and Divinity of all those which announced Jesus Christ.

But here, my brethren, is an Envoy from Heaven, predicted by an entire people, announced, during four thousand years, by a long succession of Prophets; desired by all nations; prefigured by all the ceremonies of the law; expected by all the righteous; and pointed at from afar in every age. Patriarchs died wishing to behold Him; the righteous lived in the expectation of Him; fathers taught their children to desire Him; and this desire was a kind of domestic religion, which was perpetuated from age to age. Prophets, even among the Gentiles, mark the distant glimmering of the star of Jacob; and Pagan oracles announce the great event. And He is not predicted for a private purpose, but as the resource of a condemned world, the lawgiver of the people, the light of the nations, the salvation of Israel; He is to blot out iniquity from the earth, to bring in an everlasting righteousness, to fill the earth with the Spirit of God, and to bring unto all men an eternal peace. What magnificence! what a snare to the religion of all ages, if such majestic prepa-

rations announced only a mere creature ; and especially at a time when the credulity of the people so easily raised extraordinary men to the rank of gods !

Besides, my brethren, when John the Baptist appeared upon the banks of Jordan, he performed no miracle, lest, it should seem, the single prophecy which had predicted him, should become an occasion of idolatry to the multitude, which the fame of his sanctity had drawn around him ; and he ceased not to declare “ I am not He whom you expect.” He was careful, it appears, to prevent superstitious honours being paid to him. Jesus Christ, on the contrary, whom four thousand years of expectation, of figures, of prophecies, and promises had announced with so much magnificence to the world :—Jesus Christ, instead of guarding against the superstitions of the people with respect to himself, came in great power and might ; He wrought such works and wonders as no one before him had ever performed ; and He not only elevated himself above John the Baptist, but He exalted himself to an equality with God. Where would have been his zeal for Him that sent him, and his love to men, if a mistake were to have been apprehended ; and if it were idolatry to offer Divine honours to him ?

Moreover, my brethren, all the extraordinary men who existed in former ages, all the righteous under the dispensation of the law, and of the age of the patriarchs, were only imperfect types of Jesus Christ ; and, besides, each of them represented only one striking particular of His life, or ministry : Melchisedek prefigured His priesthood ; Abraham His character as the head and father of believers ; Isaac His sacrifice ; Job His persecutions ; Moses His office as Mediator ; Joshua His triumphant entry into the land of the living with a chosen people. Yet all these venerable and eminent men were but as a rude sketch of the character of the coming Messiah ; and it was necessary that the Messiah himself should be great, since his representatives were so illustrious and distinguished. But take from

Jesus Christ his Divinity and his eternal existence, the reality possesses nothing superior to the figure. I know, as we shall shew hereafter in this discourse, that the glory of his wonders, when they are closely examined, is marked with those Divine characters which we do not find in the lives of these great men. But to judge only by an eye of sense, the parallel would not be favourable to Jesus Christ. Is He greater than Abraham?—the man who was so great, that the Lord himself has assumed, as one of his most august titles, that of the God of Abraham, as if to publish to the world, that the homage of so righteous and extraordinary a man was more honourable to his sovereignty, than the title of the God of empires and of nations—so great, that the Jews thought themselves greater than other nations of the world, only because they were the posterity of that chief, so famous and beloved of Heaven; and fathers, in recounting to their children the marvels relating to their nation, and the history of their ancestors, animated them to virtue, by reminding them that they were the children of Abraham, and a part of that holy race. Is He more wonderful than Moses? than that man, mighty in word and deed, who was the mediator of a holy covenant; who delivered his people, and broke the Egyptian yoke? that man who was established as the God of Pharaoh; who appeared the Sovereign of nature; who covered the land with plagues; who divided the waters; who caused a new kind of food to be rained from heaven? that man who saw the Lord face to face upon the holy mountain, and who appeared before Israel resplendent with glory? What is there more surprising and magnificent in the life of Jesus Christ? Yet these were only the gross outlines of his glory and power: He was to be its last finish and perfection. Now, if Jesus Christ were not the express image of the Father and the eternal brightness of his glory, we ought at the most only to equal him to these illustrious men: and the unbelieving Jews might have asked him without blasphemy, “Art thou greater

than our father Abraham, and than the prophets who are dead?" (John viii. 53.) I had reason, therefore, to say, that if you consider, in the first place, his ministry, by that splendid array of prophecies and figures which announced him, their glory is such, that if Jesus Christ is only a man like ourselves, the wisdom of God itself would become guilty of the errors of those who adore him.

But, my brethren, the Messiah was predicted with his members: we are included in the prophecies which have announced him to the world: we have been promised as a holy race, a spiritual people, who ought to bear the law written in our hearts; who ought to sigh after none but eternal blessings; and who ought to worship God in spirit and in truth: we, as well as Jesus Christ, formed the expectation of the Jews of old time, and the desire of nations: we are that new Jerusalem, pure and without spot, so frequently announced in the Prophets, in which God alone was to be known and adored, in which faith was to be the only light which should direct us; love, the sole bond which should unite us; and the hope of the heavenly country, the sole desire which should animate us. Now, do we fulfil so illustrious and holy an expectation? Are we worthy to have constituted the desire of those remote ages which have preceded us? Do we deserve to have been expected as heavenly persons, who should fill the world with holiness and righteousness? Did not former ages err in waiting for a Christian people? If the righteous of those distant times should return to the world, could we appear before them, and say, We are those heavenly, spiritual, chaste, faithful, charitable persons whom you expected? Alas, my brethren, the righteous of ancient times were Christians before the birth of the Christian faith, and we are still Jews under the Gospel; we live only for the world; we acknowledge present things as the only true good; all our religion depends on the senses; we have been favoured with greater helps, but we are not more faithful.

To the splendour of the prophecies which have announced Jesus Christ, we must add that of His works and miracles; the second striking characteristic of His ministry. Yes, my brethren, although Heaven had not promised Him to the world with so much magnificence; although He had not constituted during those first ages, the sole occupation and expectation of the universe, how did He appear upon the earth? Did there ever appear a more extraordinary character—one more Divine in His works and in all the circumstances of His life?

I say first, in His works and miracles; I know, as I have just declared, that in the ages which preceded Him, extraordinary men had appeared upon the earth, whom the Lord seemed to make the depositaries of his authority and omnipotence; Moses appeared in Egypt and in the wilderness as the Lord of heaven and earth; Elijah, in after ages, came to present the same spectacle to men. But when we closely observe them, even in their mightiest operations, we see that those wonderful men always bore the marks of dependence and weakness.

Moses performed his wonders only by his mysterious rod: without it, he was feeble and powerless; and it would seem that the Lord attached the power of miracles to that dry rod, to convince the Israelites, that Moses himself was in His hands only a weak and frail instrument, which He was pleased to employ, to effect those great things. Jesus Christ wrought the most wonderful prodigies, even without speaking a word; and the mere touch of his robe healed the most incurable maladies. Moses never communicated to his disciples the power of working miracles; it was a foreign gift which he had received from Heaven, and which he could not communicate: Jesus Christ left to His Apostles one still greater than that which appeared in himself. Moses acted in the name of the Lord: Jesus Christ wrought all His miracles in His own name; and He declares that the works of His Father are His. Yet Moses, who had not been foretold like Jesus Christ, who never forgave sins like him, who never

pretended to be equal to God, but only to be a faithful servant; Moses, fearing lest after his death his miracles should cause him to be considered as a God, takes precautions, lest in after ages the credulity of his people should lead them to offer Divine honours to him; he would have his tomb unknown in the world: he retired from others to die upon a mountain, far from the observation of his brethren, that his body might be for ever hidden from the superstition of the tribes, lest they should come to sacrifice upon his tomb; he did not shew himself to his disciples after his death; he was satisfied with leaving them the law of God, and he took every precaution to lead them to forget him. But Jesus Christ, after all the miracles which He had wrought in Judea, after all the predictions which had announced him, after having appeared as a God upon earth, has left his tomb known to the whole world, exposed to the veneration of all nations and ages; and even after his death, He re-appeared to his disciples. Was superstition less to be apprehended in this case? Or was Jesus Christ less zealous than Moses for the glory of the Supreme Sovereign and the salvation of men?

Elijah, it is true, raised the dead; but he was obliged to stretch himself several times upon the child whom he raised: he breathed—he drew up himself—he was agitated: it plainly appeared that he invoked a foreign Power; that he recalled a soul from the empire of death—a soul which was not subject to his command; and that he did not possess in himself the keys of life and death. Jesus Christ raised the dead, as He did the most common actions: He spoke as a sovereign to those who were sleeping in an eternal sleep, and it appeared evident that He was the God of the dead as well as of the living; never was He more tranquil than when He was performing the greatest things.

Finally, poets represented their sybils and their priestesses in a state of frenzy, when they foretold future things: it appeared that they could not bear the presence of the spirit of divination and imposture which possessed them.

Our prophets themselves, who announced future things, without losing the use of their reason, or departing from the gravity and decorum of their ministry, fell into a Divine ecstasy: the sound of the harp was often necessary to awaken in them the prophetic spirit: it was very evident that a foreign impulse animated them, and that it was not from themselves that they derived the knowledge of the future, and the hidden mysteries which they announced to men. Jesus Christ prophesied as He spoke: the knowledge of the future possessed nothing which struck, troubled, or surprised him, because all time was open to his view: the future mysteries which He announced were not to his mind a sudden and imparted light, which dazzled and overwhelmed him; they were familiar objects which He never lost sight of, and of which He found the images in himself, for all future ages are open to the immensity of his observation, as well as the present day which enlightens us. Hence neither the resurrection of the dead, nor the predictions of the future, drew him from his ordinary tranquillity: He amused himself, so to speak, in performing wonders in the world: and if He appeared at times to tremble and to be troubled, it was only at the sight of sin, and at the hardness of heart manifested by his people; because the greater our sanctity, the more sin strikes us with horror; and the only thing which could excite trembling in the God-man was the view of a mind defiled with crimes.

Such is the almighty power of Jesus Christ; his miracles bear no marks of dependence: and not satisfied with shewing us that He is, in that respect, equal to God, He informs us that all the wonderful works which his Father did upon the earth, He did likewise; and that the works of his Father are his. Present us a prophet, previous to Jesus Christ, who held such language; and who, instead of ascribing glory to God, as the Author of every gift, attributed to himself the great things which the Lord was pleased to effect by his ministry.

But, my brethren, if we were predicted with Jesus Christ, we also participate of his sovereignty over every creature. The Christian is by faith sovereign of nature : every thing is subject to him, because he himself is subject only to God ; all his works ought to be in a certain sense miraculous, because all his works ought to proceed from a sublime and Divine principle, and to be above the power of our feeble nature : we ought to be, so to speak, miraculous men, sovereigns of the world, by despising it ; superior to the laws of nature, by surmounting them ; the arbiters of events by submitting to them ; stronger than death by desiring its approach. Such is the sublimity of the Christian ; and how great must have been Jesus Christ to have raised human weakness to this degree of power and grandeur.

Finally, The last striking character of his ministry is found in the marvellous and, till then, unheard-of circumstances, which composed the whole course of his mortal life. I know that He came in poverty and weakness ; but veiled beneath this obscure and inglorious exterior, what glory are not the very enemies of his Divinity forced to acknowledge ?

In the first place, Although they consider him a man like ourselves, they nevertheless believe him formed by the invisible operation of the Most High in the womb of a virgin of Judah, contrary to the ordinary course of nature. In this circumstance alone, what a glory was conferred upon a mere creature !

Secondly, Scarcely was He born, when a multitude of the heavenly host made the air resound with joyful anthems, and taught us that His birth glorified the Most High, and brought an eternal peace to the earth. What creature is this that can bring glory to the Most High—to Him who derives His glory only from himself ! A short time after this a new star summoned wise men from the East ; and these righteous men, guided by that miraculous

light, came from the ends of the earth to adore the new-born King of the Jews.

Pursue the various particulars of His life. If Mary comes to present Him in the temple, a righteous man and a holy woman announce His future greatness; and, transported with holy joy, they died with pleasure, after having seen the Saviour of the world, the light of the Gentiles, and the glory of Israel. The learned doctors, assembled in the temple, saw, with alarm, that He was, even in His infancy, wiser and more enlightened than any of the learned and aged. By degrees, as He grew in stature, His glory unfolded: John the Baptist, the greatest of the children of men, humbled himself before Him, and declared himself unworthy even to perform for Him the humblest offices. The heavens several times opened over His head, while a voice declared: "This is my beloved Son." Demons, terrified at His presence, fled before Him, not being able to endure the view of His sanctity, and confessed that He was the Holy One of God. Collect these new and different testimonies, these unheard-of and extraordinary circumstances: what must that man be, who appears upon the earth with so much glory? And are not those who adore Him at least excusable?

But even these are only the feeble preludes of His glory, if He privately retire to mount Tabor, accompanied with three disciples, His glory impatient, if I may use the expression, at having been so long held captive under the veil of humanity, bursts forth: He appears resplendent with light: the Father, who ought to have informed them that this Jesus whom they beheld in such glory was nevertheless His servant and messenger, lest the glory with which He was invested should become an occasion of error and idolatry to the astonished disciples and witnesses of the spectacle, declares, on the contrary, that He was His beloved Son, in whom He had placed all His delight; and He sets no limits to the homage which He desires they should offer to Him. When Moses appeared surrounded

with glory, and as it were transfigured upon mount Sinai, lest the Israelites, always prone to superstition, should take him for a god come down to the earth, Jehovah declared, at the same time, from the height of heaven, amidst thunderings and lightnings: "I Am that I Am, and Me only shalt thou worship." Moses himself appeared before the people bearing the tables of the law in his hands, as if to convince them, that notwithstanding the glory with which he was invested, he was only the minister, and not the author of the sacred law; that he could only present it graven upon stone, and that it was the prerogative of God alone to write it in their hearts. But Jesus Christ appeared upon mount Tabor as the Lawgiver: the Father does not give Him the new law to bear it to men; He only commands them to hear Him, and He himself proposes Him as their Legislator, or rather as their living and eternal law.

What shall I say more, my brethren? If from mount Tabor we pass to Calvary—the place where the reproach of the Son of Man was to be consummated—that very place does not fail to become likewise the theatre of His glory and Divinity. All nature in disorder acknowledges Him as its author: the stars conceal themselves; the dead return to life; the tombs open, and the veil of the temple is rent in twain; unbelief itself confesses Him through the mouth of the centurion. We plainly perceive that it is no ordinary man who expires, and that something new and extraordinary takes place upon that mountain.

Many righteous persons had previously died for the truth by the hands of the ungodly. The palace of Herod had lately seen the head of the forerunner become the price of voluptuousness: Isaiah had glorified God by the cruel death he endured; his august birth, and the blood of kings which flowed in his veins, could not secure him from persecutions, which are always the recompence of truth and zeal: many others died for righteousness' sake; but all nature did not appear to interest itself in their sufferings;

the dead did not come forth from their tombs, as if to reproach the living with their sacrilege: nothing like it had ever before taken place upon the earth.

Survey the rest of his mysteries; you will every where discover new circumstances which distinguish Him from every other man. If He arise from the dead, He does so by His own power, a circumstance which had never before been witnessed; and He rises no more to return to death, like those who were raised by the ministry of the prophets: He arose to die no more; He received an immortal life while here below, a privilege never before conferred on any in the present state.

If He ascend into heaven, He is not taken thither by a fiery chariot, in the twinkling of an eye; but He majestically raises himself, He leaves his beloved disciples leisure to adore him, their Divine Master, and to accompany him with their eyes and with their homage. The angels descend to meet this King of glory, as if to welcome him into his empire, and they console his sorrowful disciples, by promising him again to the world, surrounded with glory and immortality. Every thing here announces the God of heaven about to return to the place from which He proceeded, and to repossess his glory; every thing at least tended to lead men to this conviction.

And, indeed, my brethren, when Elijah was taken up into heaven in a chariot of fire, only one disciple was a spectator of his miraculous ascension: it took place in an unfrequented place, far from the observation of the other sons of the prophets, who, perhaps more credulous and less informed than Elisha, would at the moment have offered Divine honours to that extraordinary man. But Jesus Christ ascends to heaven, encompassed with glory, in the sight of five hundred disciples. The weakest, and those in whom the faith of the resurrection was least confirmed, are the first invited to the holy mountain: nothing is apprehended from their credulity: on the contrary, their adoration is permitted, as well as their regret and their

tears ; and a life full of wonders, before unheard-of upon the earth, is at length terminated by a still more marvellous circumstance, and one of itself sufficient to cause Him to be regarded as a God, and to perpetuate error and idolatry among men.

Indeed, my brethren, if Pagan ages, in order to justify the foolish and impious homage which they offered to their legislators, to the founders of empires, and to other celebrated men, caused it to be notified to their historians and poets, that those heroes were not dead, that they had only disappeared from the earth ; and that, possessing the nature of the gods, they had ascended to the heavens, to take their place with the other stars, which, according to them, were so many divinities which enlighten us, and to enjoy with them the immortality which they derived from their divine birth : if so gross a fiction was sufficient to render men idolaters during so long a period, what impression must not this true account have made upon men ? And if the universe has adored impostors whom it was falsely asserted had ascended to heaven, would it not have been excusable in adoring a miraculous man, whom men had themselves beheld ascending above the stars, surrounded with glory ?

But beware, my brethren, lest this occasion of error should not terminate even with Jesus Christ. It is announced to us that He will come a second time at the end of the world, in the clouds of heaven, surrounded with power and majesty, accompanied with all the celestial host : all nations, assembled and alarmed, will wait at his feet the decision of their eternal state ; He will, as a Sovereign, pronounce their decisive sentence. The Abrahams, the Moseses, the Davids, the Elijahs, the John the Baptists—all that the different ages have had most grand and marvellous, will be subject to his judgment and dominion ; He alone will be exalted above all power and dominion, and above all that is called great in heaven and in the earth ; He will fix his throne above the clouds by the side of the

Most High ; He will appear not only the Lord of life and death, but the immortal King of ages, the Prince of eternity, the Head of a holy people, the Judge of every creature. What then must that Man be to whom the Lord has communicated such a power ? And can the dead themselves, who shall appear in judgment before him, be condemned for having adored him, whom they shall then behold clothed with so much glory, majesty, and power ?

And a reflection which I beg you to make in concluding this part of my discourse, is this, that if we discovered here only one extraordinary and Divine circumstance in the course of a long life, we might think that the Lord were pleased sometimes to display His glory and power in His servants : hence Enoch was translated ; Moses appeared transfigured upon the holy mountain ; Elijah ascended into heaven in a chariot of fire ; John the Baptist was foretold. But these were only single circumstances, and the language of these wonderful men, and of their disciples, respecting the Divinity and themselves, left no room for suspicion and mistake : *here* we meet with an assemblage of wonders, which, even considered separately, might have imposed upon the credulity of men : *here* all the circumstances found in these extraordinary men, who had been regarded almost as gods upon the earth, are united in Jesus Christ ; but in a manner a thousand times more glorious and divine. He is foretold, but with more pomp, and with more striking characters than John the Baptist : He was transfigured upon the holy mountain, but surrounded with more glory than Moses : He ascended to heaven, but with more marks of power and majesty than Elijah : He read futurity, but more clearly than all the Prophets : He was born not merely from a barren womb like Samuel, but, in a still more wonderful manner, from a chaste and innocent virgin : what shall I say ? And so far from undeceiving men, by plain and precise expressions respecting His purely human origin—His language concerning His equality with the Most High—the

doctrine of his disciples, who inform us that He was in the bosom of God from all eternity, and that all things were made by him—who call him their Lord and their God—who teach us that He is all in all, would justify the error of those who adore him, even though his life were, in other respects, common, and like that of other men.

O ! ye who deny him his glory and Divinity, and yet regard him as sent of God to instruct mankind, complete your blasphemy ; and confound him at once with those impostors who have come to seduce the world, since the glory of his ministry, instead of restoring the glory of God and the knowledge of his name, has only led him to set up himself for a Divinity—caused him to be placed by the side of the Most High, and plunged the whole world into the longest, the most dangerous, the most inevitable and the most universal of all idolatries.

Let us, my brethren, who believe in him, and to whom the mystery of Jesus Christ has been revealed, never lose sight of this Divine model which the Father sets before us from the top of the holy mountain. Let us enter into the spirit of the various mysteries which composed the whole of his mortal life :—they are only the different states of the Christian life upon the earth :—let us acknowledge the new empire which Jesus Christ is come to establish in our hearts. The world which we have served to the present time could not deliver us from our pains and miseries. We sought therein for liberty, for peace, and for the pleasures of life ; but we have found trouble and grief, slavery and misery. *Here* we have a new Deliverer come to bring peace upon earth ; but it is not as the world promises, that He confers it upon us. The world has wished to lead us to peace and felicity by the pleasures of sense, by indolence and vain philosophy, but it has not succeeded ; in favouring our passions, it has increased our pains : Jesus Christ comes to propose a new method to arrive at the peace and happiness which we seek—retirement, contempt of the world, the mortification of the

senses, and the denial of ourselves ; these are the new blessings which He comes to confer upon men. Let us correct our mistakes : there is no happiness to be expected, even in this life, except by subduing our corrupt propensities, by denying all the violent passions which disturb and corrupt the heart : it is only the philosophy of the Gospel, which makes men wise and happy, because that alone regulates the mind, fixes the heart, and restores man to himself, by restoring him to God. All who have followed other methods have found only vanity and vexation of spirit ; but Jesus Christ, by bringing the sword and division, is come to bring peace among men.

O, my Lord ! I am well assured that the world and its pleasures are incapable of rendering any one happy. Come then and repossess a heart which in vain flies from Thee, and which weariness of its own pursuits brings back to Thee in spite of itself : come as its Deliverer, its Peace and its Light, and have more regard to its miseries than to its crimes.

Thus the glory of the ministry of Jesus Christ would become an inevitable occasion of idolatry if He were a mere creature. Let us also see how the spirit of his ministry would become the snare of our innocence.

Part II.—The glory of the ministry of Jesus Christ is not its most august and magnificent side. However great He may have appeared to us by the predictions which announced him, by the works which He performed, and by the striking circumstances of his mysterious life, these are only the exteriors of his glory and greatness ; and to know all that He is, we must enter into the interior and spirit of his ministry. Now the spirit of his ministry includes his doctrine, his gifts, and his promises. Let us unfold all their extent, and shew, either that we must deny Jesus Christ to be a righteous man and one sent of Almighty God, which even the enemies of his Divinity acknowledge ; or admit that He is himself God manifest

in the flesh and come into the world for the salvation of men.

Yes, my brethren, this is an inevitable alternative : if Jesus is righteous, He is God ; and if his ministry is not a ministry of error and deceit, it is that of the Eternal Truth itself, which has appeared to instruct us. Now, the enemies of his Divine birth are constrained to admit that He is innocent and just, and the friend of God ; and if the world has seen wicked and profligate characters, who have dared to attack his innocence, and to confound him with seducers, they have been certain monsters, which the human race has held in abhorrence, and whose very names, odious to all nature, have remained buried in that darkness from which their horrid impiety proceeded.

What man, indeed, ever appeared upon the earth, with more incontestible proofs of innocence than Jesus Christ the Son of the Living God ? What philosopher has ever displayed such a love to virtue, such a sincere contempt of the world, such love to men, such indifference to human glory, such zeal for the glory of the Supreme Being, such superiority to every thing that men admire and pursue ? How great his zeal for the salvation of men ? This was the end of all his discourses, solicitude, desires, and inquietudes. Philosophers only criticised men, they only sought to expose their weakness or folly : Jesus Christ spake of their vices only to prescribe their remedy. They were the censurers of human weaknesses ; Jesus Christ is their Physician : they valued themselves upon remarking vices in others from which they themselves were not exempt ; He never spake but with grief of the faults from which his innocence preserved him, and He even shed tears over the irregularities of an unbelieving city : we clearly perceive that they did not wish to reclaim their fellow-creatures, but to procure esteem by despising them ; while He thought on saving them, and was no ways affected with their applause or esteem.

Trace all the particulars of his life and conduct, and

see if there ever appeared upon the earth a man so universally exempt from those weaknesses which are the most inseparable from humanity. The more closely we observe him, the more apparent is his sanctity. His disciples, who were the most intimate with him, are the most struck with the innocence of his life; and familiarity, so dangerous to the most heroic virtue, only served to discover new wonders in his. He only speaks the language of Heaven: He replies only when his answers may become useful to the salvation of those who interrogate him. We do not perceive in him those intervals in which the man only is seen. He every where appears the messenger of The Most High. His most ordinary actions are singularities, through the novelty and sublimity of the dispositions with which He performed them; and He appeared a Divine character when He eat at a Pharisee's, as well as when He raised Lazarus from the dead. Truly, my brethren, nature alone never could have so highly exalted human weakness. We have not presented to us here a philosopher who imposes on us, but a righteous man, who derives from his own example, the rules and precepts of his doctrines: and He must needs be holy, since the very disciple who betrayed him, and whose interest required the discovery of his faults to justify his perfidy, did nevertheless bear a public testimony to his innocence and sanctity; and since the united malice of the enemies He had defied could not convict him of a single fault.

Now, I say, my brethren, if Jesus Christ is holy, He is God; and whether you consider the doctrine which He has taught us with respect to his Father, or with respect to men, it is no more than a collection of malignant ambiguities, or of concealed blasphemies, if He is no more than a mere man, sent from God to instruct mankind.

I say, if you consider him with respect to his Father. Indeed, if Jesus Christ is a mere messenger from The Most High, then He came only to manifest to idolatrous nations the unity of the Divine essence. But besides, that his

mission principally regarded the Jews who had, for a long time, been free from idolatry, and consequently had no need that God should raise up a prophet to correct an error from which they were exempt, and a prophet which they were led to expect from the Creation of the world, as the Light of Israel and the Deliverer of his people ; besides that, how does Jesus Christ undertake to fulfil his ministry, and what is his language concerning the Supreme Being ? Moses and the Prophets, charged with the same mission, did not cease to declare that the Lord was one ; that it was impious to compare him to any creature ; and that they were only his servants and messengers, mean instruments in the hands of God, who by them wrought such great things. No doubtful expressions escape them respecting an essential point of their mission : no comparisons between them and the Supreme Being, always dangerous through the propensity which mankind had to prostitute their homage to man, and to make to themselves sensible and visible gods : no ambiguous terms, which might confound them with the Lord, in whose name they spake ; and which might give occasion to a superstition and an idolatry which they came to oppose.

But if Jesus Christ is only a messenger like them, He was far from fulfilling his ministry with the same faithfulness. He did not cease to declare himself equal to his Father : He came to inform us that He descended from heaven, and from the bosom of God ; that He was before Abraham ; that He was before all things ; that He and the Father were one ; that eternal life consists in knowing the Son, as well as in knowing the Father ; that all which the Father doeth, the same doeth the Son likewise. Find me a prophet, who, before Jesus Christ, held such new, such unheard-of, such disrespectful language concerning the Supreme Being ; and who, instead of giving glory to God, as the Author of every good gift, attributed to his own power, the great things which the Lord deigned to effect by his ministry. He every where compares himself to the

Supreme God. Once, indeed, He said that the Father was greater than He : but what is that language, if He is not himself God manifest in the flesh ? And should we not regard a person as a madman who should seriously announce to us that the Supreme Being was greater than he ? Is it not to equal himself to the Divinity to dare measure himself with Him ? Is there any proportion of more or less between God and man, between the whole and nothing ? But what do I say ? Jesus Christ is not satisfied with declaring himself equal to God : He even vindicates the novelty of his expressions from the murmurs of the Jews, who were offended at them : so far from plainly undeceiving them, He confirms them in their offence : He every where affects a language, which becomes either foolish or impious, if his equality with his Father does not clear up and justify it. What does He come to perform upon the earth, if He is not God ? He comes to stumble the Jews, by giving them reason to believe that He compares himself with the Most High : He comes to seduce the nations, by causing himself to be adored by the whole world after his death : He comes to spread new darkness over the earth, and not to diffuse, as He boasted, wisdom and light, and the knowledge of God. What, my brethren ! did Paul and Barnabas rend their clothes, when they were taken for gods ; did they run in among the people, who wished to offer sacrifices to them and cry out, Worship God, to whom we are only messengers and servants ? Did the angel in the Apocalypse, when St. John prostrated himself to worship him, reject the homage with horror, and say to him, " See thou do it not ; worship God ? " And did Jesus Christ quietly suffer Divine honours to be paid to him ?—commend the faith of the disciples who adored him, and who, with Thomas, called him their Lord and their God ? And did Jesus Christ even confound his enemies, who denied his Divinity and his eternal origin ? Is He then less zealous than his disciples for the glory of Him that sent him ? Or is He

less concerned to free his people from an error so injurious to the Supreme Being, and which annihilates the sole fruit of his ministry?

And verily, my brethren, what blessings has Jesus Christ brought to the world, if those who adore him are idolaters and profane? All who have believed in him have adored him as the eternal Son of God, the express image of his person and the brightness of his glory. There is only a small number, professing Christianity, who, acknowledging him as a messenger of God, have refused to offer Divine honours to him: that very sect, banished from every part, execrated in the very places where every error finds an asylum, is reduced to a few obscure and secret adherents; is every where punished as guilty of impiety, as soon as it dares openly to avow itself, and obliged to hide itself in darkness, and in the extremities of the most distant provinces and kingdoms. Is this, then, that numerous people, of every kindred, nation, and tongue, which Jesus Christ came to form upon the earth? Is this that Jerusalem, once barren, now become fruitful, which was to inclose in its bosom kingdoms and nations, and to which the most distant isles, with their princes and kings were to resort to worship? Are these the great advantages which the world was to derive from the ministry of Jesus Christ? Is this, then, that abundance of grace, that fullness of the Spirit of God shed abroad over all men, that universal renewal, that spiritual and durable reign which the prophets had predicted with so much majesty, and which was to accompany the coming of the Deliverer? What, my brethren! Is an expectation so magnificent reduced to the seeing the world plunged into a new idolatry? Was then that great event, which was foretold during so many ages, announced with so much pomp, desired by all the righteous and shewn from afar to the whole world, as involving its highest felicity and constituting its sole resource, intended only to corrupt and pervert it for ever? Was then that church so fruitful, in

kings and Caesars at the head of their people, who were to become her children, only to enclose in her bosom a small number of persons abhorred both by heaven and earth—the disgrace of nature and of religion—obliged to hide themselves in the horrible darkness of their blasphemies? Was, then, all the future magnificence of the Gospel to be confined to the forming the frightful sect of an impious Socinus?

O God! how wise and reasonable does the faith of Thy church appear, when we oppose it to the contradictions of infidelity! and how consoling is it to those who believe and hope in Jesus Christ, to notice the abysses which pride forms for itself, when it undertakes to open new ways, and to sap the sole foundation of the faith and hope of Christians!

Thus, my brethren, the doctrine of Jesus Christ, with respect to His Father, establishes the glory of His eternal origin. Besides, when the Prophets speak of the God of heaven and earth, their expressions fall short of the grandeur and magnificence of their ideas. Full of the immensity of the Almighty, and of the majesty of the Supreme Being, they exhaust the weakness of human language to answer to the sublimity of those subjects. This God is he who measures the waters of the sea in the hollow of his hands; who weighs the mountains in his scales; who holds the thunders and the tempests in his fist; who commands, and it is done; who amuses himself in sustaining the universe. Mere men ought to speak thus of the glory of the Most High: the infinite disproportion which is found between the immensity of the Supreme Being, and the weakness of the human mind, ought to strike, to dazzle, and confound it; and the most pompous terms are never sufficiently so, to express its admiration and surprise.

But when Jesus Christ speaks of the glory of the Lord, we do not meet with the pompous expressions of the Prophets: He calls him holy Father, righteous Father, merciful Father; a Shepherd seeking a lost sheep—and who,

finding it, lays it upon his shoulder rejoicing ; a Friend who suffers himself to be overcome by the importunities of his friend ; a Father affected with the return and repentance of his son : we clearly perceive that this is the language of a child—that the familiarity and simplicity of his expressions suppose him possessed of a sublime knowledge, which renders the idea of the Supreme Being familiar to him, and prevents his being struck and dazzled like us with his majesty and glory ; and that He speaks only of what He himself clearly perceives and actually possesses. We are much less struck with the glory of those titles which we have borne from our birth : the children of kings speak with simplicity of sceptres and crowns ; and none but the eternal Son of the living God can speak so familiarly of the glory of God himself.

Such, my brethren, since we participate with Jesus Christ in all his advantages, is the right which He has acquired for us to regard God as our Father, to call ourselves his children, and to love rather than to fear him. Yet we serve him as slaves and as mercenaries ; we fear his chastisements ; we are but little affected either with his love or his promises : his righteous and holy law possesses nothing amiable in our view : it is an oppressive yoke, which excites our complaints, and which we should soon shake off, if the transgression of its rules were to go unpunished : we continually hear complaints against the strictness of its precepts, and disputes to support the mitigations which the world incessantly mingles with it. In a word, if He were not a God that taketh vengeance, we should deny him ; and He owes to his justice and to his chastisements both our respect and our homage.

But the doctrine of Jesus Christ, with respect to the men whom He came to instruct, equally establishes the truth of his Divine birth : for I do not now speak of the wisdom, sanctity, and sublimity of his doctrine ; the whole of which is worthy of reason, and of the soundest philosophy ; every thing therein is suited to the

misery and to the excellency of man,—to his wants and to his high destiny : every thing inspires a contempt of the things that perish, and a love of eternal blessings : every thing maintains the good order and tranquillity of states : every thing is great, because every thing is true. The glory of men's actions becomes more real and striking in the heart than in their outward expression. The wise man, under the Gospel, only seeks, from his virtue, the satisfaction of obeying the God who will one day reward it ; and he prefers the testimony of his own conscience to the applause of men : he is greater than the whole world, by the eminence of his faith ; and he is below the meanest of men, by the modesty of his sentiments. His virtue does not seek in pride the indemnity of his sufferings ; it is the first enemy which it attacks ; and in that Divine philosophy, the most heroic actions become worthless, as soon as we begin to reckon them for something : it regards glory as an error, prosperity as a misfortune, elevation as a precipice, afflictions as favours, the earth as a place of exile, and every thing that occurs as a vain dream. What is this new language ? What man, previous to Jesus Christ, ever spake in this manner ? And if His disciples, for having only announced that heavenly doctrine, were taken by a whole people for gods come down to the earth, what worship could they refuse to Him who is its author, and in whose name they published that doctrine ?

But let us leave these general reflections, and come to the more precise duties of love and dependence which his doctrine requires men to pay to himself. He commands us to love him as we love the Father : He wishes us to dwell in him, that is to say, to fix in him, to seek our happiness in him, as in his Father ; to refer all our actions, all our thoughts, all our desires, even our whole selves, to his glory, as to the glory of the Father : even sin is forgiven only to those who love him much ; and the love which they have to him, constitutes all the righteousness of the righteous, and the whole reconciliation of

the sinner. What man is this who comes to usurp, in our breasts, the place due to God himself? Does the creature deserve to be loved for itself? and is not every thing great and amiable which it possesses, the gift of Him who alone deserves to be loved?

What prophet, before Jesus Christ, ever came and said to men, You shall love me; you shall do every thing for my glory. Moses had said to the children of Israel, You shall love the Lord your God. Nothing is amiable for itself, but that which can make us happy: now, no creature can constitute our happiness or perfection; no creature, therefore, deserves to be loved for itself; it would be an act of idolatry. Every man who comes to propose himself to men as the object of their love, is an infidel and a deceiver, who comes to usurp the essential rights of the Supreme Being: he is a monster of pride and extravagance, who wishes to have altars erected to himself even in the heart, the sole sanctuary which the Divinity never ceded to profane idols. The Divine doctrine of Jesus Christ, so much admired even by heathens, would, in that case, be only a monstrous compound of impiety, pride, and folly; if, not being himself God blessed for evermore, He had constituted, the love which He requires from his disciples, his most essential moral precept; and it would be foolish ostentation in him to come and propose himself as an example of humility and modesty, while He carried pride and self-complacency further than the proudest philosophers: for they never aspired at any thing more than the esteem and applause of men.

But this is not all: Jesus Christ not only requires our love; He demands the proofs of the most universal and heroic attachment. He desires us to love him more than our neighbours, our friends, our possessions, our fortune, or our life—than the whole world—than ourselves; that we endure and renounce every thing for him, and that we shed even to the last drop of our blood for his sake: he who does not pay him this high homage, is not worthy of

him : he who compares him with any creature, or with himself, insults and dishonours him, and ought not to expect any thing from his promises.

What, my brethren ! Is He dissatisfied with the sacrifices of bulls and goats, with which idols, and even the true God, appeared to be satisfied ? Does He carry his pretensions still further ; does He desire man to sacrifice himself—to rush upon his own destruction, and to offer himself to death and martyrdom for the glory of His name ? But if He is not the proprietor of our life, what right has He to require this from us ? If our souls did not proceed from His hands, is it to Him that we ought to restore them ? Is it to regain our life to lose it, for the love that we bear Him ? If He is not the Author of our being, do we not become sacrilegious persons and homicides, by immolating ourselves for his glory, and by transferring to a creature, and to a mere messenger of God, the great sacrifice of our being, which is destined only to acknowledge the sovereignty and power of the eternal Workman who drew us from nothing ? Let Jesus Christ die, if he please, to ascribe glory to God ; let him exhort us to follow his example : many Prophets before him have died in the cause of Jehovah, and have exhorted their disciples to walk in their steps ;—but, that Jesus Christ, if He is not himself God, should command us to die for *Him*—should require from us that highest expression of love ; that He should order us to offer up a life for him which we did not derive from him ; could there be men upon the earth so grossly stupid as to suffer themselves to be deceived by such an extravagant doctrine ? Could such whimsical and impious maxims triumph over the whole world, confound every sect, bring back every mind, and prevail over all the learning, wisdom, and doctrines which had previously appeared in the world ? And if we regard those savage nations as barbarians, which immolated themselves upon the tombs and ashes of their neighbours and friends ; why should we

ascribe greater honour to the disciples of Jesus Christ who sacrificed themselves for him? And would not his religion, in that case, be both bloody and barbarous?

What, my brethren, did the Agneses, the Lucies, the Agatheses, those first martyrs to the faith and to modesty, sacrifice themselves to a mortal man? And in choosing rather to shed their blood than to bow the knee to a worthless idol, did they avoid one idolatry only to fall into a more blamable one in dying for Jesus Christ? Did Ignatius, that famous martyr which the East furnished to Rome, in wishing to become the wheat of Jesus Christ, lose all the fruit of his sufferings, and deserve from that time to be torn to pieces by enraged lions, since he offered himself in sacrifice to a man like himself? Were those generous confessors of the faith then mere desperadoes and fanatics, who as fools rushed upon death? Was then the tradition respecting the martyrs only an impious and bloody scene? Were then tyrants and persecutors the vindicators of the justice and glory of the Divinity? Was Christianity itself a sacrilegious and profane sect? Were then the human race deceived? And did the blood of the martyrs, instead of being the seed of the faithful, inundate the whole world with superstition and idolatry? O God! can the ear of man hear these blasphemies without horror? And what more can be necessary to confound infidelity than to exhibit it to itself?

Such, my brethren, are our first duties towards Jesus Christ. To sacrifice to Him our inclinations, our friends, our neighbours, our fortune, and even our life; and in a word, every thing which becomes an obstacle to our salvation: this is to confess His Divinity; it is to acknowledge that He alone can supply the place of all which we abandon for him; and that He is able to restore, by giving himself to us, more than we relinquish for him. It is only he who despises the world and all its pleasures, saith the Apostle John, who confesses that Jesus Christ is the Son

of God, because he thereby declares that Jesus Christ is greater than the world, more capable of rendering us happy, and consequently more worthy of being loved.

But it is not sufficient to have considered the spirit of the ministry of Jesus Christ in his doctrine; we must consider it, in the second place, in the graces and blessings which the world has received from him. He came to deliver all men from eternal death: though enemies to God, He has made them his children; He has opened heaven to them; He has secured to them the possession of the kingdom of God, and of unfading blessings; He has brought them the knowledge of salvation and the doctrine of truth. Those magnificent gifts have not even ceased with his abode upon earth: seated at the right hand of his Father, He still sheds them abroad in our hearts; all our calamities still find their remedy in him; He feeds us with his body; He washes us from our defilements, by incessantly applying the price of his blood; He appoints Pastors, to lead us; He inspires Prophets, to teach us; He sanctifies the righteous, to animate us by their example; He is incessantly present in our hearts to solace us under all our miseries: man has no sinful passions which His grace cannot purify, no affliction which it cannot soften, no virtue which is not produced by its influence: in a word, He himself assures us that He is our way, our truth, our life, our light, our righteousness, and our redemption. What is this new doctrine? Can a mere man be the source of so many favours to others? Can a Sovereign God, so jealous of his glory, attach us to a creature by such intimate and sacred duties and bonds, so that we should depend upon him almost more than himself? Would there be no cause to fear lest a man, become so useful and necessary to others, should at length become an idol? That a man, the author and dispenser of so many favours, and who performs with respect to us all the offices and functions of a God, should soon occupy his place in our hearts?

For, remark, my brethren, that it was gratitude alone

which formerly created false gods. Men, forgetting the Author of their being, and of the universe, adored the air by which they lived, the earth which nourished them, the sun that enlightened them, and the moon which presided over the night: these were their Cybele, their Jano, their Apollo, and their Diana. They adored the conquerors who delivered them from their enemies; the good and equitable princes who had rendered their subjects happy, and the memory of their reign immortal; both Jupiter and Hercules were placed in the rank of gods, the one by the number of his victories, and the other by the happiness and tranquillity of his reign. Men in those superstitious and credulous ages, acknowledged no gods, but their benefactors. And such is the character of man; his worship is only the expression of his love and gratitude.

Now, my brethren, what man ever did so much good to men as Jesus Christ? Recollect all that Pagan ages relate in the history of their gods; and see if they believed themselves indebted to them for all that infidelity itself admits that the world is indebted to Jesus Christ. To some they believed they owed the serenity of the air, and a prosperous navigation; to others, the fruitfulness of the seasons; to Mars, the success of battle; to Janus, the peace and tranquillity of nations; to Æsculapius their health. But what are these small blessings, if you compare them with those with which Jesus Christ has loaded the world? He has procured for it an everlasting peace, a durable holiness, with justice and truth: He has made a new world and a new earth: it is not one nation alone which He has loaded with blessings, but all nations; it is the whole world: and moreover He became our benefactor only by becoming a sacrifice for us. What more could He have done for the earth? If gratitude has constituted gods, could Jesus Christ fail to find worshippers among men? And would it be suitable that we should owe Him so much, if our love and gratitude were liable to excess?

Besides, my brethren, if Jesus Christ had, in his dying

moments, informed his disciples that it was to the Lord alone that they owed so many blessings; that he was himself only the instrument, and not the author and source of all these favours; and therefore they ought to forget him, and to give glory to God, to whom alone it was due: but it was with very different instructions that Jesus Christ terminated his miracles and ministry. Not only was He unwilling that his disciples should forget him, and cease to hope in him after his death; but, when on the point of leaving them, He assured them that He would be present with them always, even to the end of the world; He promises them still more than what He had bestowed, and binds them to him by indissoluble and eternal bonds.

The promises, indeed, which He made them in his last moments, are still more surprising than the favours which He conferred upon them during his life. In the first place, He promised them the Spirit, the Comforter, whom He calls the Spirit of his Father—the Spirit of truth, whom the world could not receive—the Spirit of power, who was to form martyrs—the Spirit of understanding, who had enlightened the Prophets—the Spirit of wisdom, who was to guide the pastors of his church,—and the Spirit of peace and love, who was to make all believers of one heart and of one soul. What authority has Jesus Christ over the Spirit of God, to dispose of him at his pleasure, and to promise him to men, if He is not his own Spirit? Elijah, when about to ascend to heaven, regarded it as a hard thing to promise to Elisha alone, a double portion of his spirit of zeal and prophecy: how far was he from promising to him the eternal Spirit of God—that free Spirit who bloweth where He listeth? Nevertheless the promises of Jesus Christ have been accomplished: He had scarcely ascended to heaven before the Spirit of God was poured out upon his disciples; the ignorant became wiser than sages and philosophers; the weak, stronger than tyrants, and those the world esteems fools, more prudent than all the wise men of the age. A new race appear upon the

earth, animated with a new spirit: they draw every thing after them; they change the aspect of the world; and even to the end of ages, that Spirit will animate his church, will form righteous characters, will confound infidels, will comfort his disciples, will support them in the midst of persecution and reproach, and will bear witness in their hearts that they are the children of God, and that august title gives them a right to blessings more solid and real than all those of which they were stripped by the world.

Secondly. Jesus Christ promises to his disciples the keys of heaven and hell, and the power to forgive sin. Were the Jews, my brethren, offended because He undertook to remit it himself, and because He appeared to attribute to himself a power that belongeth only to God? What then would be the offence of all the nations of the earth, when they should read in his Gospel that He even left this power with his disciples? And if He is not God, have folly and rashness ever imagined any thing so extravagant? What right indeed has He over the consciences of men to bind or loose them at his pleasure, and to transmit to weak mortals a power which He could not, without blasphemy, have exercised himself?

In the third place. But this is not sufficient; He promises besides to his disciples the gift of miracles—that they should raise the dead in his name—that they should give sight to the blind, health to the sick, and speech to the dumb—and that they should be sovereigns over nature. Moses did not promise to his disciples the miraculous gifts with which the Lord had favoured him; he sensibly felt that the power did not belong to him, and that the Sovereign Lord alone could favour whomsoever He pleased. Besides, when, after the death of Moses, Joshua arrested the sun in its course, to complete his victory over the enemies of the Israel of God, he did not command that heavenly body to stop in the name of Moses; it was not from him that he derived the power to make the heavenly bodies obey him; it is not to him that he addresses himself

when he would use that power : but the disciples of Jesus Christ can do nothing but in the name of their Master ; it is in His name that they raise the dead, and that they restore the lame ; and without that Divine name, they are weak like other men. The ministry and power of Moses terminated with his death : the ministry and power of Jesus Christ commenced, so to speak, only after His death, and we are assured that His reign must be eternal.

What shall I say more ? He promises to his disciples the conversion of the universe, the triumph of the Cross, the obedience of all the nations of the earth ; of philosophers, of Cæsars, and of tyrants ; and that his Gospel shall be received by the whole world : but does He hold the hearts of all men in his hands to guarantee a change, of which, till then, the world had had no example ? You will, no doubt, tell us that God reveals future things to his servants. But you mistake : if He is not God, He is not even a prophet : His predictions are dreams and chimeras : it is a lying spirit that seduces him, and undertakes to foretel the future, and the results have belied the truth of his promises : He predicted that all nations, sitting in the shadow of death, were about to open their eyes to the light ; and He perceived not that they were about to fall into a more criminal darkness by adoring himself. He foretold that his Father would be glorified, and that his Gospel would every where procure to the Father spiritual worshippers, who would worship him in spirit and in truth ; and He perceived not that men would eternally dishonour him, by equalling himself to the Father, even to the end of the world, while He ought to have been considered only as his messenger and prophet : He predicted that idols would be overturned ; and He perceived not that He should himself be put in their place : He foretold that He would form a holy people of every language and tribe ; and He perceived not that He came solely to form a new race of idolaters out of all nations, who would place him in the temple as the living God ; who would

refer to him all their actions, their worship and their homage; who would do every thing for his glory; who would depend only upon him, live but by him and for him, have no strength, motion, or virtue but by him; in a word, who would adore him, who would love him a thousand times more spiritually, more intimately and more universally, than the heathen had adored their idols. We have here, therefore; not even a prophet; and His relations are not chargeable with blasphemy when they take him for a fanatic and a madman, who gives to the dreams of his heated imagination, all the weight and reality of revelation and mystery: *Quoniam in furorem versus est* (Mark iii. 21).

It is to this, my brethren, that infidelity leads. Overturn the foundation, which is the Lord Jesus, the eternal Son of the living God, and the whole edifice crumbles to pieces: take away the great mystery of godliness, and all religion is a dream: cut off from the doctrine of Christianity Jesus Christ the God-man, and you take away all the merit of faith, all the comfort of hope, and every motive to love. Besides, my brethren, what zeal did those first disciples of the Gospel shew against the impious characters who then dared to attack the essential Divinity of their Master? They perceived that it was attacking religion at the heart; that it was depriving them of every thing that sweetened their persecutions and sufferings, of all confidence in future promises, and of all their great and noble expectations; and that if this principle were once subverted, all their religion would become an empty vapour, and would be no more than a human doctrine, and the sect of a mortal man, who, like other leaders, had only left his name to his disciples.

Besides, my brethren, the heathen then reproached Christians with offering Divine honours to their Christ. A Roman pro-consul*, who is celebrated for his works,

* Pliny.

after having given an account of their manners and doctrine to the Emperor Trajan, was forced to avow that the Christians were righteous, innocent, and equitable, and that they assembled before sun-rise—not to commit crimes among themselves and to disturb the tranquillity of the empire, but to live piously and righteously, and to excite each other to detest fraud, adultery, and even the coveting the goods of others: he only reproached them with singing hymns and songs in honour of their Christ, and of rendering homage to him as God. Now, if those primitive Christians had not offered Divine honours to Jesus Christ, they would have justified themselves from that slander: they would have removed the offence of their religion, almost the only one which shocked the zeal of the Jews and the wisdom of the Gentiles: they would openly have declared, “We do not adore Jesus Christ, we are very far from transferring to the creature the honour which is due only to God.” Yet they do not vindicate themselves from this charge. Their apologies always refute other calumnies with which the heathen endeavoured to defame their doctrine; they justified themselves from every other aspersion; they cleared up, they confuted the slightest accusation; and their apologies, addressed to the senate, gained the admiration of Rome itself, and every where silenced their enemies. But respecting the charge of idolatry towards Jesus Christ, which would have been the most crying and horrible; and respecting the reproach which they attributed to them for adoring a crucified person, which was the most plausible and the most capable of rendering them odious, and which ought indeed to have been the most grievous to such holy men, so decidedly hostile to idolatry, so jealous of the glory of God, they do not say one word; they do not defend themselves; they even justify that conduct by their silence: what do I say—by their silence? They even establish it by their language respecting Jesus Christ, by suffering for his names’ sake, by dying for him, by confessing him before tyrants, and by cheerfully expiring at

the stake in the consoling expectation of going to enjoy him, and of receiving in his bosom an immortal life, for that which they resigned for his glory. They suffered martyrdom rather than bow the knee before the statues of the Cæsars, yea rather than permit their heathen friends, who, from natural compassion, were disposed to screen them from punishment, falsely to attest before the magistrate, that they had offered incense to idols; and would they have suffered themselves to be accused of offering Divine honours to Jesus Christ, and not strive to remove that false imputation? Ah! they would have published the contrary upon the house tops; they would have exposed themselves to death, rather than give occasion to so odious and execrable a suspicion. What can infidelity oppose here? And if it is an error to believe Jesus Christ to be equal to God; it is an error which was born with the church, and which has reared the whole edifice; which has formed numerous martyrs, and converted the whole world.

But what fruit is to be derived from this discourse, my brethren? It is this, that Jesus Christ is the great object of Christian piety. Yet you scarcely know Jesus Christ. We are not much concerned though every other pious practice be left indifferent; but this is the foundation of faith and salvation; this is simple and sincere piety; to meditate incessantly upon Jesus Christ, to run to him, to feed upon his doctrine, to enter into the spirit of his mysteries, to study his actions, and to depend only on the merit of his sacrifice, is the sole knowledge and the most essential duty of the faithful. Remember therefore, my brethren, that piety towards Jesus Christ is the intimate spirit of the Christian religion; that nothing is solid, but what you build upon this foundation; and that the principal homage which He requires of you is to become like him, and to take his life as the model of your own; in short, that, conformed to his image, you may be of the number of those who will partake of his glory. Amen.

SERMON IV.

ON THE PASSION OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

JOHN XVIII. 37.

To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth.

OPPOSITION to the truth has always been the most distinguishing characteristic of the world, and the most constant punishment of sin. Since man has effaced from his heart that eternal law which God, at his creation, engraved therein to guide and enlighten him, and has substituted his passions and ignorance for that Divine light which was born with him, he has created within himself an invincible opposition to the truth which continues to strengthen in proportion as the world, daily more corrupt, departs from its original purity, and as the wickedness of men increases upon the earth.

Yet God, my brethren, amidst the darkness which covered the face of the universe, still caused his truth and light, from time to time to shine forth. Righteous men, raised up by Heaven, appeared from age to age to bear testimony to the truth, and to prevent error and passion from prevailing against that sacred light. From the blood of Abel to the time of John the Baptist, Heaven furnished the earth with an uninterrupted succession of prophets, martyrs, and witnesses to the truth: some bore testimony to the truth by their blood, like Abel; others by their piety, like Enoch; some by their innocence, like Noah; others by their faith, like Abraham; Isaac by his obedience,

Job by his patience, Moses by his miracles; and in fine, to render the world inexcusable, the truth had witnesses and defenders, raised up in every age against it, who preserved, among men, the doctrine and the truth committed to them, and which the world, in spite of its precautions, could never totally extinguish.

This cloud of witnesses, which, as the Apostle speaks, had from age to age, borne testimony to the truth, was sufficient, I admit, to condemn the world by the truth; but it did not deliver the world by its light. The truth therefore required a greater testimony: it was requisite that He, who is the Wisdom and the Light of the Father, should come Himself to bear testimony to what He had seen; that He should confirm his doctrine by his blood; that his doctrine should cleanse the world from the errors, which had, till then, inundated it; and that Christ crucified should be, to the end of time, the great witness to the truth in opposition to the ignorant and erroneous maxims of the world.

The mysterious sorrows and ignominy of the Saviour present us, this day, with two very different spectacles: on the one hand, the world, ignorant and opposed to the truth, after having rejected the testimony of prophets and righteous men in every age, again rejects this day the testimony of Jesus Christ himself: on the other hand, Jesus Christ upon the cross, become the great witness of the truth, to confound the ignorance of the world; even to the end of time; that is to say, the death of Christ, become the greatest proof of the opposition of the world to the truth, and the greatest testimony of the truth against the world.

O my Saviour! we have till now, like the world, presented hearts rebellious against thy doctrine of truth: we have listened to thy holy word during these days of penitence and salvation, with the same insensibility as that with which Jerusalem formerly listened to thee in the days of thy personal ministry. But to-day, in which thou no

longer speakest to us, O Lord ! but by thy sorrows and humiliation, in which thou only lettest us hear the voice of thy blood ; to-day, in which, nailed to thy ignominious cross, thou art become the great witness of thy truth against the world, do not permit that so new and affecting a method of instruction should find us still insensible. We come to lay at the foot of thy cross, hearts, which we admit are still full of criminal passions and attachments ; but let a single drop of that blood fall upon us, which thou this day offerest to thy Father on our behalf, and we shall be clean : cast upon us, as upon that happy sinner who expired at thy side, one compassionate look, and we shall be saved : deliver us through the truth, of which thou art this day the great witness, and we shall be translated from the slavery of the world and of sin, into the sacred liberty of the children of God. This is what, prostrate at the foot of thy cross, we entreat from thee.

Part I.—The world has never loved the truth, because the truth has always condemned the world : men wish quietly to enjoy their errors and crimes ; and as that false security can be maintained only so long as they can succeed in blinding themselves, the light, which opens their eyes to the truth, pains and offends them.

Hence, those prophets and righteous men whom the Lord, in his mercy, raised up from age to age to be witnesses to the truth, were always hated of men, and disapproved by the world, whose maxims they came to condemn. Isaiah, notwithstanding the blood of kings which flowed in his veins, saw all Jerusalem conspire his ruin, and wishing to extinguish in his blood that truth which never dies with the righteous who die in its behalf. Jeremiah met with no more favourable treatment from his people ; and bonds and prisons became to him the reward of the truth, of which the persecutions of the wicked are always in this life the recompence. Elijah found in Israel none but hearts opposed to the truth, and the most inaccessible

mountains could scarcely serve him for an asylum from the ambushes of the wicked. In fine, the world, constantly opposed to the truth, has always risen up against those who came to disturb it in the peaceable possession of its errors and maxims.

It is nevertheless true, that it is by the condemnation and death of Jesus Christ, that the world gives, this day, the greatest and the most striking proof of its opposition to the truth; that is to say, to the truth of his doctrine, of the Scriptures, of his miracles, of his innocence, and of his royalty. Let us examine all these particulars.

I say, in the first place, *An opposition to the truth of his doctrine*; and it is *worldly considerations* which create this opposition, even in his disciples. In vain did the Saviour prepare them for the reproach of the Cross, by frequently announcing to them that the Christ must needs suffer, and then enter into his glory—that they ought not to promise themselves a part in his kingdom, except as they drank of his bitter cup, and that blessed were they who suffered and were persecuted: in vain were all his doctrines designed only as a preparation for crosses and sufferings: as soon as the world declares itself against him—as the priests assemble—as the doctors conspire against him—as the people murmur—as all Jerusalem rejects him; as soon, I say, as this is the case they waver, and are discouraged. And here we see to what a degree worldly considerations blind them respecting the truth of his doctrines.

In Judas they form a traitor, who betrays his Divine Master, and who unites with his enemies to destroy him. That unfortunate disciple, intimidated by the outrageous conduct of the principal persons of Jerusalem against the Saviour, is not satisfied with forsaking him; he applies to the chief priests, and he becomes the instrument of their rage and envy: “What will you give me,” said he to them, “and I will deliver him unto you?”—Ah, faithless disciple! what can the world give you, in exchange for

that which you received from Jesus Christ, and which you are now about to lose. What! the glory and esteem of men? but your name was written in heaven, and it is about to become the eternal reproach and horror of the whole earth. The world justifies vice; but it is only virtue that it really esteems. What! titles and honours? but Jesus Christ had appointed you a shepherd over his sheep, a pillar of his church, a prince of a new people; and to supply the place of these august titles, the world is about to degrade you to the most vile and infamous services. How great are we when we belong to Jesus Christ! and how despicable, and devoted to every thing the most base and cowardly, when we are the slaves of the world! What! possessions and riches? but Jesus Christ had committed to you heavenly treasure; He had given you the whole earth for your portion: all was yours; while the world gives you in exchange only a base reward, with which, after having long waited for it, you are disgusted as soon as you come to its possession. The world promises *much*, and confers *nothing*; Jesus Christ always gives more than we expect, and his gifts always exceed his promises. What beside! would it have given real pleasure and durable felicity? but Jesus Christ would have left you a peace of mind which is the portion of his disciples, and the only source of true pleasure; while the world is about to leave you only painful reflections, a dreadful despair, and all the weight of your crimes: the world by its pleasures conducts you to all the bitter consequences of yielding to sinful passions: Jesus Christ, through sufferings, leads you to peace of mind, and to the tranquil and solid pleasures of innocence. What then do you wish the world to bestow upon you? As we can hope for nothing from the world, neither should we dread any thing from its opposition.

But the fear of man, which was the first occasion of the treachery of Judas, becomes the occasion of the defection of the other disciples also. The Shepherd being smitten, the sheep are scattered. They boldly followed him while

they beheld him the Sovereign of life and death ; and while, by his striking miracles, He drew after him the great and the vulgar : it then seemed to them a peculiar privilege to be of the small number of the disciples whom He had chosen ; they did not blush to belong to him—they gloried before men in being his disciples : but as soon as He was seized, bound and despised, they hid themselves ; they no longer acknowledged him ; his weakness offended them ; his reproach, which had been so often foretold, discouraged them. Virtue applauded, honoured, caressed, never wants followers : virtue despised, or persecuted, no longer finds persons who dare to glory in openly declaring themselves in its favour.

Peter himself, who, at a distance from danger, promised himself every thing from his courage, is not proof against so dangerous a temptation. He is asked if he is not of the small number of those happy persons, to whom God the Father had revealed the mystery of Christ :—if he is not one whom he has invested with his authority, to whom he has committed the keys of heaven and hell—the power to tread upon serpents and to control nature at their pleasure :—if he is not one of those founders of the Gospel, who are about to erect the standard of the faith in the midst of the darkness of idolatry, to conquer the whole universe, to overturn every profane altar, to confound every sect, to enlighten all nations, to put to silence the wisdom of philosophers, to bring the Cæsars into subjection, to carry salvation to the whole earth, and who were at length to appear in the air seated upon twelve thrones of light, to judge the twelve tribes of Israel :—finally, if he is not one of those new ministers of the priesthood, who were to be the first pastors of his church, the priests of the true riches, the Melchisedecs of a holy people, the mediators of a new covenant*, the reconcilers of men with God, before whose feet the princes and the kings of the earth would

* See Note E, in Appendix.

bow their lofty heads and place their sceptres and their crowns?—"Art not thou one of this man's disciples?" Dost thou then blush, weak disciple! to avow so much greatness, glory, and magnificence? Art not thou this man's disciple? What folly! to be ashamed of the appellation of a disciple of Jesus Christ before men! Has the world, with all its glory, any thing so great, so high, so valuable, so worthy of reason, as true virtue?

Yet Peter dares not avow himself a disciple of the Saviour: a cowardly fear blinds him. He declares that he knows not *the man*: he affects to be ignorant even of the name of his Divine Master. Cowardly disciple! Yet this is that very Jesus, who, from a catcher of fish, made you a fisher of men; and who for your boats and nets conferred upon you the chief and principal ministry of his church. "I know not the man:" he no longer knows Him: yet this is that Son of the living God whom you so nobly confessed, and for whom you have so often said that you were ready to die. "I know not the man:" he will no longer know Him: yet this is that Good Master, who honoured you with the most tender familiarity, who admitted you to his most private favours, and always preferred you to all the other disciples. He affects to be ignorant even of his name: "I know not the man:" yet this is that Lord, who upheld you on the waves of the agitated sea—whom the winds and the deep obey, and whom you beheld on Mount Tabor surrounded with glory and immortality. He no longer knows him: "I know not the man:" yet, lastly, this is the Christ, to whom all the Prophets bear witness—the Lamb of God, whom John the Baptist pointed out to you—whom all the sacrifices prefigured—whom all your fathers demanded—whom men lately called, some Elias, others John the Baptist, or one of the prophets, and whom you yourself acknowledged as the Son and Messenger of God, who alone had the words of eternal life. "I know not the man:" he forgets his favours, his miracles, his doctrine. To what a degree do

worldly considerations blind a weak and fearful mind ! And while we continue to fear men, what security can we give to Jesus Christ for our conduct ?

What a weakness, my brethren, to fear the eye of man, while obedient to God ! To glory in serving the kings of the earth, and to be ashamed of the service of Him whom kings obey, and through whom alone they have a right to reign ! To have had the resolution to watch in the service of a wretched world ; to bear the frowns, the caprices, the humiliations, the disgusts of the world ; and not to have the resolution publicly to consecrate to Jesus Christ the remains of a worldly life, and to practise in the presence of men, those sublime duties, and those noble maxims which He imposes ! What a weakness ! to value ourselves upon sacrificing to the world, and often to unjust and whimsical masters, our repose, our health, and our consciences, and not to dare to sacrifice to Jesus Christ, the frivolous discourses and vain censures of the world ! O my God ! shall the world always have avowed partisans of its childish illusions ? And shall the sublime wisdom of thy doctrine, never find any but trifling and fearful disciples ? This is a weakness and timidity in disciples, which obscures the truth of the Saviour's doctrine.

Secondly, Another cause of opposition is the *envy* of the priests and of the learned doctors, which *obscures the truth of the Scriptures*, to which Jesus Christ frequently referred them, as the most unequivocal testimony to the truth of his ministry : " Search the Scriptures," He frequently said to them ; " for these are they which testify of me." The sceptre of Judah in the hands of a stranger, no longer permitted them to doubt that the appointed time was arrived ; and that He who was to come had at length appeared : the blind restored to sight, the lame enabled to walk, the poor having the Gospel preached to them, and a thousand other traits of his ministry, sufficiently informed them that it was of him that Isaiah and the other prophets had spoken, when they announced the Christ.

But the envy which blinds them, overcomes the truth that enlightens them: the great reputation of Jesus Christ, and his zeal against their hypocrisy, creates in their minds an envy which blinds them, which closes their eyes to all that they owe to the truth: the more conspicuous the purity of Christ, the more their unjust passion is irritated and inflamed; the following are the proceedings and characteristics of envy.

In the first place, a want of sincerity: "What shall we do?" said they; "for this man doth many miracles, and all men run after Him." (John xi. 47.) They cannot hide from themselves the truth of his miracles: "This man doth many miracles:" they all admit it; but it is that very thing which grieves and which blinds them. They are aware that they sink in the esteem of the people, in proportion as the reputation of Jesus Christ is established and increased: "What shall we do?" say they. Blind leaders of the blind! what shall you do? Exclaim with the people, "That the Lord has visited Israel, and that a great Prophet is risen up among you" (Luke vii. 16). Say with the scribe instructed in the kingdom of God, "Master, we know that thou art sent of God; for no man can do the things which thou doest, except God were with him" (John iii. 1). What shall we do? Say with him who was born blind, "Lord, I believe that thou art the Son of God" (John ix. 38); with the woman of Tyre, "Son of David, have mercy on us" (Matt. xv. 22); with the holy Simeon, "Let us now depart in peace, since our eyes have seen the salvation of God" (Luke ii. 29, 30); with his disciples, "To whom can we go, since thou hast the words of eternal life?" (John vi. 69). Lastly, say, at least with demons, "We know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God" (Mark i. 24). "What shall we do?" Ah! Tyre and Sidon, where He never performed any miracle, might say, "What shall we do?" And who will shew us the salvator of the earth? The nations which had for many

him, might have had a right to say, "What shall we do? we have waited for light, and we are still in darkness." The kings and prophets, who so earnestly desired to see him, might have cried out, "What shall we do, since He so long delays his coming? and who will declare to us the day of his arrival?" But *you* to whom the grace of God our Saviour has appeared; *you* whose eyes have been so happy as to see what so many prophets had predicted what so many righteous men had desired, what so many nations had waited for, what heaven had so many ages promised to the world: *you* to whom our heavenly Father has shewn His well-beloved Son, what can you have to do but to listen to him, but to receive the salvation so long since promised to your fathers?

And this is the first characteristic of an unreasonable envy, insincerity. To those whose elevation we regard with envy, we openly deny the laudable talents and qualities which we cannot but be conscious they possess: we find defects even in their virtues, when we cannot disguise them as vices: the same envy which leads us more clearly to discern their amiable qualities, leads us to despise them: we are delighted to set the public against them, while our own minds, better informed, justify them: hence, the pleasure which we take in deceiving others with respect to them is never complete, as we cannot succeed in deceiving ourselves.

In the second place, another characteristic of envy is, meanness. They secretly seek a *false* witness against Christ, and can find none. (Matt. xxvi. 59, 60.) Had they sought for a *true* witness, all would have vindicated his innocence: the people would have exclaimed, "That God had never given such power unto men." (Matt. ix. 8.) Those whom He had restored to life, and the many diseased whom He had cured, would have protested, "He is the resurrection and the life." (John xi. 25.) Numerous converted harlots, would have declared, "We could not resist the gracious words which proceeded out of His lips." (Luke iv. 22.)

The very stones of the temple would have exclaimed after their manner, "The zeal of his Father's house hath eaten him up." (John ii. 17.) How abundant the light, had they been willing to see! Against how many truths must we close our eyes, and to how many meannesses must we submit, if we once surrender our minds to the influence of this sinful passion!

And this is its second characteristic. The methods which envy takes to injure others are always secret, because they are always mean and grovelling. We glory in other passions: an ambitious man boasts of his pretensions and hopes; a revengeful man glories in proclaiming his resentment; a voluptuary boasts of his excesses and debaucheries: but there is something so inconceivably base in envy, that we conceal it even from ourselves: it is the passion of cowardly minds; it is a secret avowal of our own mediocrity; it is a blindness, that closes our eyes to every thing base and contemptible: we are capable of any thing when we can be enemies to merit and innocence.

In the third place, cruelty is another characteristic of envy. Those corrupt judges delivered the Saviour to the insolence and fury of their servants and ministers; and envy, always cruel, led them to behold, with inhuman pleasure, the ignominy and reproach with which they covered him: the very sanctuary of justice, and the majesty of the tribunal upon which they sat, did not afford an innocent person an asylum from insults and outrage. Ah! the ark of Israel was safe in the temple of Dagon; and even the idol itself respected the majesty and glory of Him who resided therein, by falling at his feet: yet Jesus Christ, the Ark of the New Testament, is this day insulted even in his sanctuary, and by his own ministers; and if they prostrate themselves at his feet, it is in derision, to insult him in his sorrow and ignominy.

How little humanity remains in the heart of man, who, after having regarded the prosperity of his brother with

envy and grief, can look on his misfortunes with complacency and joy!—Cruelty is the third characteristic of this unjust passion. It hardens the heart and extinguishes every sentiment of piety and tenderness; so that those under its influence see the calamities and falls of their brethren with secret exultation: they can only be happy through their misfortune. Gladness was diffused through the family of Haman, even at the prospect of the misfortune and punishment of Mordecai. It is the passion of a depraved heart; and yet it is daily manifested before our eyes, and is the predominant passion of courts. This cruel passion changes society into a dreadful arena, upon which men appear to meet together only to devour and destroy each other; and upon which the fall of some always occasions the victory and triumph of others. What blindness to exist in Christians who ought to look upon each other as brethren, and as heirs together of the same blessings and of the same promises!

Finally, in the fourth place, another characteristic of envy is the sacrifice of their country's interest. "We have no king," they exclaim, "but Cæsar" (John xix. 15). They who lately boasted that they had never been in bondage to any man; who detested the yoke of the uncircumcised; who had the privilege to be the people of God, and to have the Lord alone for their King and Father; who regarded the sceptre of other nations as a tyranny, and who believed that all kings and nations would become tributary to Jerusalem, sacrifice that glory, and the advantages which distinguished them from the other nations of the earth, to the horrid pleasure of beholding the ruin of him, to whose reputation a secret envy rendered them irreconcilable: "We have no king but Cæsar;" they renounce the distinguishing glory of being the kingdom of God, the hope of Israel and the promises made to their fathers, provided they can effect the destruction of this innocent person. Detestable passion, how wert thou con-

ceived in the heart of man? And shall the ruin of thy nation and of thy country affect thee less, than the horrid pleasure of gratifying thy resentment?

Yes, my brethren, this is its last characteristic. We sacrifice every thing, religion, the state, the public welfare, the glory of our country, to our base resentment: every thing that favours the person, whom envy renders odious, becomes odious to us: if they suggest any thing useful to the people and the state, we reject it; if they reject that which is unjust and pernicious, we approve it. This blind passion glides even into the cabinets of kings, and into the councils of princes—divides those whom the common interest and the public good, whom the love of their prince and of their country, ought to unite: we seek to ruin each other at the expense of the welfare and necessities of the public. The miseries of the public have a thousand times derived their source from private envy: we forget all that we owe to the country and to ourselves; and nothing remains sacred to a heart which envy has embittered and envenomed. Such opposition to the promises and truth of the Scriptures did envy excite in the hearts of the priests.

In the third place, *Ingratitude*, wrought up to fury, produced in the people a mad *opposition to the truth of the Saviour's miracles*. Witnesses to so many prodigies which he had wrought before their eyes, they appeared in crowds in the suite of his disciples; they had even attended him, in his late triumphant entry into Jerusalem, and had caused the air to resound with their acclamations and encomiums; they had covered the road with olive branches, as if to erect a trophy to the Prince of Peace, who came to bring peace and salvation to Zion: yet these same persons to day most furiously declare themselves against Jesus Christ, pursue him as though He were a mover of sedition, and they demand his death of Pilate, exclaiming, "Let Him be crucified: we will not have this man to reign over us" (Luke xix. 14). What ingratitude! In the wilderness,

while He miraculously fed them, they wished to make him a king ; but in Jerusalem, they no longer know him, and they even regard his yoke as a disgraceful servitude.

It is ingratitude, my brethren, which occasions our inconstancy in the ways of God. Affected, at times, with his grace, and with the distinguished benefits which he had heaped upon us, by making a thousand happy events subservient to our salvation, we wished him to reign over us—we followed him for a time—we were gratefully affected with the peculiar preference and kindness which he had shewed us : but the world, our own weakness, the temptations which we were not sufficiently careful to avoid, soon effaced those sentiments from our breasts ; we forgot both his benefits and our promises : and as ingratitude, and the abuse of favours, is always wont to dry up their source in the bosom of God, he gave us up to all the corruptions of our hearts ; we, without consideration, declare ourselves against him : we give full loose to our irregular desires ; and, in order to stifle every remaining sentiment of virtue, we become bold in sin.

Hence, my brethren, inconstancy in the ways of salvation is the greatest obstacle which Divine grace has to oppose in our hearts. We do not continue for a single moment the same : *now* touched of God, *anon* enamoured with the world ; *now* forming plans for retirement, and *anon* those of ambition ; *now* fatigued with pleasure, *anon* feeling a new desire for its enjoyment revive within us. Our hearts, every moment, carry us away—nothing arrests us—nothing fixes us ; and our inconstancy becomes a burden to ourselves. We wish to fix our hearts—to oblige them to adopt an abiding course either in vice or in virtue ; but the first object that presents itself, seizes and captivates them : we live in perpetual vacillations, without any rule, maxim, or principle, unable to answer for ourselves for a single moment, and deriving the rule of our conduct only from the inequality of our humour, and of our imagination.

And it is this which renders us incapable either of virtue or of truth: virtue demands a uniform life, and continually sacrifices the inconstancy of a light and changeable imagination to order and duty. In vain are we wearied with our own inconstancy: we are wearied still more with the uniformity of virtue; a life always the same, always subject to the same laws and rules, always incommoded with the same duties, discourages us. Ah! if to be holy, it were only necessary to perform one heroic act of virtue—to make one great sacrifice, or to take one noble step, it would be much easier to most men. We possess sufficient resolution to do great violence to ourselves for a moment; all the powers of the mind seem then to unite, and the shortness of the combat sweetens and alleviates the pain. But that which wearies in the practice of virtue is this, that after one sacrifice another is presented, which must also be made; that the vanquished passion immediately revives, and new efforts become necessary to subdue it. Peter finds himself to-day sufficiently valiant to draw the sword, and to defend his Master from the sacrilegious persons who insult him; but when the temptation is renewed, he is discouraged and falls: it is easy to be heroic and noble on certain occasions; the difficulty lies in being in every circumstance stedfast and faithful. Such is the blindness occasioned by the ingratitude and inconstancy of the people, which resists the truth of the Saviour's miracles.

In the fourth place, The blindness of *ambition* in Pilate, which *resists the truth of his innocence*.

The Saviour of the world is dragged before that infidel magistrate: every thing convinces Pilate of his innocence; he owns that he finds nothing in him worthy of death; but they threaten him with the displeasure of Cæsar: "Thou are not Cæsar's friend" (John xix. 12). And these are all the obstacles that a cowardly ambition excites in his heart against the truth which he knows, and which he cannot conceal from himself.

In the first place, an obstacle of dissimulation and insincerity. Not being able to conceal from himself the innocence of the Saviour, to which his silence, his answers, the accusations of the Jews, the dreams of his wife; in short, every thing bears testimony: but on the other hand, unwilling to expose himself to the danger of a revolt in Jerusalem, which might have displeased Cæsar, and have drawn disgrace upon himself, he proposes expedients to save Jesus Christ; he wishes to avail himself of the circumstance of the Passover, in which it was customary to grant to the people the life of one criminal; and by that means he gave them to understand, contrary to the convictions of his own mind, that Jesus Christ of Nazareth stood in need of favour; and that he was worthy of death, if the voice of the people did not cause the indulgence which was allowed them at the Passover to fix upon him.

This is the first obstacle that ambition excites in the heart: it renders us false, cowardly, and fearful, when it becomes necessary to maintain the interests of justice and truth. We are always fearful of giving offence; we always wish to conciliate and to accommodate every thing; we are incapable of uprightness and candour, and of a certain magnanimity which the love of equity inspires, and which alone makes great men, good subjects, faithful ministers, illustrious magistrates, and Christian heroes: they put Jesus and Barabbas upon a level, are always ready to sacrifice one or the other, according as the time, or the occasion, may demand. Hence we can never depend upon a heart in which ambition is predominant: it possesses nothing certain, fixed, or great; destitute of principles, maxims, or sentiments, it assumes every form, and continually bends to the passions of others; it incessantly says, like Pilate, "Which of the two will ye that I release unto you?" (Matt. xxvii. 12.) Which do ye wish me to deliver—which to destroy? equally disposed, as the wind may happen to blow, either to maintain the cause of

equity, or to afford its protection to injustice. In vain is it said that ambition is the passion of great minds; we are great only through the love of truth, and when it is only by truth that we wish to please.

Secondly, An obstacle of hatred to the truth, which renders it burdensome to us. The preference which the Jews shew to Barabbas, embarrasses Pilate: "What then shall I do with Jesus, who is called the King of the Jews?" said he to them. The Saviour is an obstacle in his way: His innocence is a burden to him; he wished the Jews to manage their own affairs: "Take ye him, and judge him according to your law" (John xviii. 31): the cause of innocence is odious to him.

This is the second obstacle which ambition places in the heart: it renders justice and truth odious to us. Uprightness in an accused person embarrasses us: we wish those whom we must destroy in order to please, to be always criminal: we consider it a misfortune to be entrusted with their cause; we seek to free ourselves from it; and instead of joyfully embracing the opportunity afforded us of succouring the innocent, we flee from the glory of a good action, as we ought to flee from the infamy of a base one.

In the third place, An obstacle of hypocrisy, which makes even truth to subserve the views of ambition. Pilate, having learnt that Jesus Christ was a Galilean, sends him to Herod, under the pretence that as Galilee was subject to that prince, it belonged to him to judge Jesus Christ. It is not a desire to preserve the life of an innocent person that determines Pilate to adopt this step; it is to recover the friendship of Herod which he had lost: he makes Jesus Christ subserve his ends, and turns him to his own private advantage.

This is the third obstacle: an ambitious mind is so much the further removed from the truth, as it ostentatiously pretends to love and to follow it. It is this vice which forms all the feigned virtues, and especially under the present reign, in which virtue is become the certain road to

favour and benefits : they, like Pilate, make use of Jesus Christ to gain the good-will of the prince. After having tried every other means, this is the last resource which ambition inspires : it employs all that is the most holy and sacred, even the appearance of zeal and virtue. How great the misfortune to be so depraved as to turn even Jesus Christ to our own ruin—to make virtue the way to the indulgence of sinful passions, and the attractive to vice—to employ religion to favour the worldly ambition which it condemns—to convert even the resources of piety into motives of lust, and the arms of truth into instruments of duplicity and lies ! How little hope of salvation remains to such a soul—to one who can abuse the gift of God, and make no other use of Jesus Christ, the Judge and enemy of the world, than to employ him to arrive at the honours and the good-will of the world itself !

Finally. The last obstacle is a treacherous conscience, which, by sacrificing the truth to worldly interest, leads us to think that we have nothing with which to reproach ourselves. Pilate, seeing that his delays and trimming only served the more to excite and enkindle the rage of the Jews, at length delivers the Saviour to their fury : “ He delivered him to their will ” (Luke xxiii. 25). But he, at the same time, washes his hands : he consents to his being put to death, and yet declares that he is clear from the blood of that just person (Matt. xxvii. 24).

This is the last obstacle which ambition opposes to the truth : we indulge a treacherous conscience respecting many steps the most opposed to our duty and to the rule : we persuade ourselves that necessity, that circumstances, that the public welfare, that state-policy, that what is due to our rank, and to the duties of office, by rendering certain transgressions as it were inevitable, render them, at the same time, innocent. Hence, those compliances which we make, contrary to the dictates of our consciences, and to a sense of duty, are always considered necessary, as soon as they become useful to us : they have always cer-

tain sides, by which they present us with the exteriors of wisdom and prudence: finally, whatever may conduce to our interest soon becomes innocent. "I am innocent," says Pilate.

Besides, ambition, that vice which occasions so many enmities, jealousies, meannesses, and acts of injustice; that vice which insinuates itself even into our virtues, and from which the most righteous are scarcely exempt; that vice which infects every court, and which is as the soul, and the chief spring that puts every thing in motion; that vice, I say, is the one concerning which we feel the least remorse, and which we never think to confess at the penitential tribunal. The success of ambition satisfies us as to the sinfulness of the means which it adopts; and to have been fortunate suffices to persuade us that we are innocent.

I said in the last place, that a sinful blindness in Herod, which turns the royalty of Jesus Christ into ridicule. He cannot conceal from himself that he is a usurper of the throne of David, and a stranger in the heritage of Zion: the fears of his predecessor, respecting the birth of the new King of the Jews, whom the Magi came to adore, were too recent, were too well remembered, and had been marked by circumstances too public and sanguinary not to have reached him. But impiety always treats the truth as mere superstition and credulity; and such is the conduct which it produced in Herod.

Then, curiosity: he wished to see the man, respecting whom fame had published such marvellous things; he hoped to have witnessed some of those wonders which the Saviour had wrought in Judah. "He hoped to have seen some sign done by him" (Luke xxiii. 8): he did not seek instruction, he sought only a striking spectacle. He put a thousand useless questions to Jesus Christ respecting his ministry: "He questioned him in many words" (ver. 9); not to learn the truth, but to turn it into ridicule, and to confirm himself in infidelity. These are the usual

steps of impiety: sinners wish for miracles in order to believe: they submit not to the voice of all ages, and of all nations, which proclaim the striking wonders to which the church owes its birth and its progress: they will not see that the reception of the Gospel and its continuance in the universe, is the greatest miracle which God could perform in the world: they wish to become Christians through the medium of the senses, and they can only become such through faith. They, like Herod, wish to see men who have been celebrated; through the greatness of their knowledge, and through a public reputation for zeal and virtue: but it is not to receive information; it is, like Herod, to suggest endless doubts and vain and trifling questions: "He questioned him in many words." They value themselves upon having difficulties respecting the common faith: they seek to discourse respecting the truth, but they seek not the truth itself; they continually speak of religion, and yet they possess none: "He questioned him in many words."

Those who interrogated Jesus Christ to receive instruction, contented themselves with inquiring, "Master, what must we do to inherit eternal life" (Luke x. 25). Their first inquiry was respecting their duty: they hastened to the remedy of their most urgent calamities: they wished him to teach them how to subdue their passions and to practise the precepts of the law: "What shall we do that we may inherit eternal life?" They wished to come to the truth by the way of duty—not to doubt the truth, in order to be dispensed from obligation. These, on the contrary, proposed by their questions and doubts only to say to themselves, that every thing is really uncertain, and that no satisfactory solution of them can be given: and to have the boldness to doubt the truth, is to them a decisive proof against its acceptance. It is thus, O my God! that Thy justice punishes the pride of reason, by giving it up to its native darkness.

To curiosity Herod adds derision: not having been able

to extort a single word from Jesus Christ, he despises him, and his whole court follow his example: Herod with his men of war set him at nought (Luke xxiii. 11). The silence of the Saviour, his modesty, his patience under the indignities to which He is exposed, his humility which led him to conceal his Divine talents and his admirable works before Herod; all those things which ought to have been to that prince so many striking proofs of the sanctity of Jesus Christ, only served to make him pass for a man of a weak mind, and of an erring reason: he clothes him with a white robe, as a madman, and sends him back to Pilate.

And this is the way, my brethren, in which Jesus Christ is every day treated by the world, in the person of his servants, and especially in the courts of kings. If good men dispense with certain pleasures; if they take no part in certain conversations; if they conform not to certain customs; if they scruple certain corrupt practices, which common example authorises: far from admiring the strength of their grace, and the greatness of their faith which can resist the torrent of pleasure and example, they treat their piety and their magnanimous virtue, as weakness of mind. They regard them as idle and narrow-minded persons who are destitute of elevation and courage, and as incapable of following a more brilliant course: they think that we should leave a certain round of devotions, to those, who, by the mediocrity of their talents, have nothing better to do: they value themselves upon not resembling them: they think too highly of themselves to imagine that they are suitable persons to fulfil the sublime duties of religion: they suppose themselves born for greater things than to serve God—to save their souls—to merit an eternal kingdom and to be received into that everlasting city, where the citizens will all be kings, and where all greatness, being annihilated, they alone will enjoy immortality and glory.

Profane world! you always will despise Jesus Christ, because Jesus Christ will always condemn you: His cross

will always appear foolishness to you, because it will always confound your false wisdom. Reprobate world! you will always reject Jesus Christ, because He has himself rejected you from his inheritance. You will continually treat his disciples as madmen, because their conduct makes you continually feel that you are such. Miserable world! you will always deliver up Jesus Christ, because Jesus Christ incommodes and embarrasses you: you will continually sacrifice conscience and duty to base and grovelling objects, because you know not God, and you will never have any other Divinity than a base fortune, which costs you much, and which can never satisfy your desires and expectations. Unjust world! you will always persecute Jesus Christ, because Jesus Christ came only to destroy your empire: you always suspect the innocence, the virtue, the uprightness of his servants, because you will always be interested in persuading yourselves that virtue is only a pretence, and that the most virtuous men differ not from yourselves. Insensate world! you will always be ashamed of Jesus Christ, you will always shrink from religion as a weakness, because you will always prefer the glory of men to that which cometh from God. Truth will never deliver you, because you will always hold it in unrighteousness; and Jesus Christ will find in the midst of you even to the last as at this day in Jerusalem, a blindness of human policy, which will resist the truth of his doctrine; a blindness of jealousy, which resists the truth of the Scriptures; a blindness of fickleness and ingratitude, which will resist the reality of his miracles; a blindness of ambition, which will resist the truth of his innocence; finally, a blindness of impiety, which will resist the truth of his royalty. It is thus that the world this day displays all its opposition to the truth by condemning Jesus Christ: we must see how Jesus Christ, upon the cross, becomes this day the great witness to the truth, thereby to condemn the world.

Part II.—The death of Jesus Christ is the great wit-

ness to the truth, in opposition to the errors and prejudices excited by human passions; and it is peculiarly on this day that the Father has established his Son, as He says in Isaiah, the Witness to the truth, to condemn the world which rejects it: "Behold I give Him a witness to the people" (ch. lv. 4).

Now, we have seen that the world, by rejecting this day Jesus Christ, shuts its eyes against the truth of the Scriptures, which bear testimony to Him—against the truth of his doctrine, which has so often announced him; against the reality of his miracles, of which it was a witness; against the truth of his innocence, of which it was convinced; and finally, against the truth of his royalty, which it had previously acknowledged. Jesus Christ upon the cross this day condemns the world, by giving a striking testimony to all these truths; to the truth of the Scriptures, by accomplishing them in his death; to the truth of his doctrines, by confirming them by his sufferings; to the truth of his miracles, by renewing them upon Calvary; to the truth of his innocence, by praying for his murderers; finally, to the reality of his kingdom, by establishing his power, and by conquering the world by his cross. And hence it is, that He came into the world only to bear testimony to the truth: "For this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth" (John xviii. 37).

In the first place, to the truth of the Scriptures, by accomplishing them in his death. Yes, my brethren; the death of Jesus Christ becomes this day the great proof of the truth of the Scriptures: it is that alone which justifies the Prophets, which unfolds the prophecies, which clears up obscurities, and which explains the figures: it is the sacred key which opens the seven seals of the closed book. Without the solution of this great sacrifice, the sacred books are incomprehensible, the darkness of prophecy is impenetrable, the worship and ceremonies of the law appear childish, a thick cloud is spread over that sacred

book ; but the death of Jesus Christ throws a new light over that mystery, ordained from before the foundation of the world ; we see clearly into all its figures ; we discover the spirit of all its ceremonies ; we enter into the sense of all its prophecies ; we feel the truth and the divinity of our sacred books. We have here the Lamb slain from the beginning of the world ; the Abel who perishes under the blows of a disgraceful jealousy ; the Isaac, obedient even unto death, and ready to be sacrificed upon the holy mountain ; the Joseph, sold by his own brethren, and afterwards the saviour of Egypt ; the Job, that man of sorrow, who, by his patience and afflictions, merited to repossess his property and glory ; the David, driven from Jerusalem, ascending the mount of Olives, covered with reproach and ignominy, loaded with the curses and derisions of his people, who reviled and insulted him ; the Jonah, buried during three days in the depths of the sea, and raised again to save Nineveh. Finally, God appears to have been, from the beginning of time, only concerned to prepare the minds of men for that mysterious sacrifice, and in tracing, long before, the symbols and figures of it in the sacred books. The covenant of Sinai, confirmed by blood, announced that the blood of Jesus Christ would ratify the New Covenant, which the Lord designed to contract with men. The bitterness of the waters of Mara, sweetened by the mysterious wood, represented the depravity of the nations, purified by the sacred wood of the cross. The lifting up of the brazen serpent, as the remedy of the wounds of the people, was only the symbol of Jesus Christ lifted up upon the cross, as the remedy of our plagues and defilements. Finally, we find that the most minute circumstances respecting the death of Jesus Christ were predicted in the sacred books, and from the beginning announced to men ; the gall which would be given him to drink, the execrations with which He would be covered, the nails which would pierce those sacred hands and feet, the lot by which they would part his garments, the treachery of the disciple

who would betray him and fall from the Apostleship, the two malefactors between whom he would expire, the spear which would pierce his side, those bones which were not to be broken, the loud cries which he would present to his Father: so that the prophecies appear to be only a clear and anticipated history of the sorrow and reproach of his cross.

It is by this means that the death of Jesus Christ, as saith the Apostle, confirms, fulfils, and justifies every thing. It is by this means that this mystery, which so greatly shocks human reason, and which is foolishness to the Gentiles, and an offence to the Jews, is nevertheless the evidence of our faith, the confirmation of our sacred books, and the confusion of infidelity. It was therefore necessary that Jesus Christ should suffer and die, that the Scriptures might be fulfilled—that the people who were witnesses to this fulfilment, should submit to their authority—that the sacred books should be diffused through all nations—and that it should be to the end of time the warrant of our faith, the foundation of our hope, the immutable rule of our worship, the mysterious rock against which all the efforts of human pride, and all the violence of superstitions and sects should be dashed to pieces; and finally, the eternal monument of the Lord's mercy towards mankind. What grandeur in the very lowliness of our mysteries! It is thus, O my God, that thou hast always delighted to confound the pride of reason, and to sport with the vain wisdom of men, by hiding the wisdom and the sublimity of Thy ways under mean and foolish appearances, by conducting us to the truth by humility, and by repulsing the feeble light of a vain reason to remove its darkness. The first testimony which Jesus Christ bears this day to the truth of the Scriptures, is the fulfilling them by his death.

In the second place, it bears a testimony to the truth of his doctrine, by confirming it through his reproach and sufferings. He had taught us that blessed were they that

suffered, and that it is only through self-denial that we can attain to salvation : all his doctrines seem to tend to this one point, to humble the spirit and to mortify the senses of men. Now, no philosopher, previous to him, had announced to men that the way to felicity was through humiliation and sufferings : thus was that secret of the kingdom of heaven, till then unknown to the children of the world. It was necessary therefore that his example should confirm his new precepts—that He should bear no resemblance to those false sages who preceded him, who, while they ostentatiously inculcated contempt for every thing, enjoyed every thing with pleasure, and that the humiliations and sorrows of his death should become the great witness to the truth of his doctrine.

I say the sufferings of his death. And what sufferings ! The wormwood and the gall, which they give him to drink ; the loathsome spittle, with which they cover his adorable visage ; the scourge, which lacerates his sacred body ; the barbarous buffetings, which bruise him ; the crown of thorns, which pierces his temples ; the weight of the cross, which overwhelms him ; the nails, which fasten him to it ; the human efforts, which crucify him. What sufferings ! His Spirit afflicted with the heinousness of our crimes ; his heart grieved at the inutility, as to many, of his sufferings ; his love wounded by the ingratitude of his people, and the calamities which were about to be poured out upon that favoured nation. This is the great model that is, this day, shewn to us from the top of the holy mountain, and which is a decisive answer to all our vain excuses.

For, my brethren, what can our impenitence oppose to this great example ? What ?—Our innocence. A regular life free from gross excesses, and which seems to give us a dispensation from those tears and mortifications which appear to be destined only to punish our crimes ? But Jesus Christ who was holy, harmless, separate from sinners, fulfils his ministry, only by sufferings ; effects our salvation, only by the cross ; takes our nature, only to become a

man of sorrow. Does not our being his disciples, lay us under an indispensable obligation to tread in his steps?

But besides your innocence? Great God! Thou knowest us: Thou hast counted our steps from our mother's womb: Thou hast witnessed our most secret sins: Thou hast even foreseen our falls: our early manners, and our late practices are all equally present to thine eyes: *Tu cognovisti omnia novissima et antiqua* (Psalm cxxxix. 5). Thou has known our last as well as our first actions. And thou, great God! knowest what a life we shall one day present to thy justice, when the veil shall be removed; and when that phantom of virtue which now deceives us, will fall off and vanish before the light and the terrible glory of thy justice and judgments.

What besides? The rank and elevation in which Providence caused us to be born? But did Jesus Christ, the successor of numerous kings, the immortal King of ages, seek, in the grandeur of his titles, for reasons which should dispense him from the cross and from violence? On the contrary, He desires to suffer with all the marks of his greatness, with his sceptre, his purple, and his crown; as if to teach us that penitence is still more necessary to the great than to the people; as they have more crimes to lament, more passions to subdue, more stumbling blocks to remove, more pleasures to expiate, and as the very marks of their greatness are only the source and the instruments of their sufferings; and as the privilege of their condition is not to enjoy more pleasures, but to have more to sacrifice than believers in general.

What besides? Their indifferent health and their delicate constitution? But the body of Jesus Christ, formed by the Holy Spirit, and the most susceptible of pain which had ever appeared upon the earth, is bruised and broken for us. But besides, what is this weakness of constitution, which possesses such strength to endure the fatigue of sinful passions, and to run in the ways of iniquity; but which is weak and destitute of courage, only when it is

necessary to go to God, and to take a single step in the path of righteousness?

What then? The goodness of God, who is too indulgent a Sovereign, and who loves us too well to require us to render ourselves miserable to please him? But does He love us more than He loved his only Son, and through whom alone we are worthy of his affection? And yet, what a cup did He appoint him to drink? through what tribulations did He cause him to pass? If the Righteous One is treated with so much severity, will He reserve all his indulgence for the guilty?

What, finally? The rigours and the difficulties of penitence? But, my brethren, let us compare the sufferings which religion imposes upon us with the sufferings of Jesus Christ; and let us, if we are able, sustain the comparison. Alas! our sufferings consist rather in abstaining from certain pleasures, than in the endurance of pain; in retrenching certain superfluities, than in imposing grievous privations; in not allowing every indulgence to the senses, rather than in mortifying them: and besides, in how many respects are these small privations alleviated? The grandeur that encompasses us, the abundance which attends us, the elevation which flatters us, the magnificence that dazzles us, and all the advantages in the midst of which we are born. What, my brethren, do we suffer? And if we do not suffer, how can we lay claim to the promises which are made only to those who suffer? The second testimony which Jesus Christ upon the cross bears to the truth of his doctrine, is the confirming of it by his humiliations and sufferings.

In the third place, while upon the cross He bears testimony to the reality of his miracles by renewing them. But it is not so much by opening the graves, by breaking the rocks, by obscuring the sun and covering the whole earth with darkness, that He this day confirms his power, and that He bears testimony to the truth of all his miracles: it is by converting a thief that is expiring by his

side—by changing the heart of the centurion, who presides at his execution, and by obliging him openly to confess his power and Divinity; and by melting the spectators of his death, and obliging them to return, smiting their breasts, while they shed tears of contrition and penitence: *Et revertebantur percutientes pectora sua.* This is the great miracle that attended the death of Jesus Christ; the conversion of great sinners: and remark particularly, in the character of the sinners whom he converted while on the cross, the greatness of his power in his humiliation.

The first is a dying malefactor, who had, till then, lived without God in the world, and who had brought to the cross no other preparation for death, than the horrors of a most criminal life. Yet this happy criminal, in that last moment when a person's conversion is almost always despaired of—when the tokens of repentance that are exhibited are rather excited by the punishment which is dreaded, than by the crimes which are detested—when the sinner is frightened, but his heart rarely, if ever, changed: in that last moment when God, having been previously despised by him, despises the sinner in his turn, and retires—when the measure of iniquity being full, the grace of repentance is commonly denied: in that last moment when the sinner is already judged, and when the sudden alarm of death is usually the just punishment of his impenitence and irregularities: in that last moment, this happy criminal finds grace and salvation. The first drops of the blood of Jesus Christ, which flow from the cross purify him in a moment from all the defilements of his life: he acknowledges the glory and the Divinity of his Deliverer, though he beholds him loaded with ignominy: after a life of crimes, he, in his dying moments, receives from the very lips of Jesus Christ, the assurance of his pardon; and the last moment in which he expires, becomes the one of his eternal salvation.

Such, my brethren, is the great miracle of the death of Jesus Christ—the conversion of a dying sinner: and yet

every sinner expects the same miracle in his last moments. He would consider it madness to expect the sun to be again eclipsed ; to see the graves again opened ; the dead arise to life ; the veil of the temple rent ; all the miracles which were then wrought again renewed : what folly then to promise ourselves the miraculous conversion then wrought upon a dying sinner ; a greater and more wonderful prodigy, than all the other miracles which then took place upon Calvary ! It was proper that that great sacrifice, predicted in every age, and so necessary to the human race, should be marked by singular and until then unheard-of circumstances ; that every thing should be singular ; that every thing should there bear testimony, by its novelty, to the glory and Divinity of the Son of Man. But Jesus Christ having died once, dies no more, saith the Apostle ; the rocks are not again rent ; the dead do not again come forth from their graves ; the whole earth is not afresh covered with darkness ; the veil of the temple is not again rent, dying sinners are not as then converted ; and death-bed conversions have only this example and prodigy to countenance them.

The second sinner whom Jesus Christ converts, while on the cross, is an infidel—a Roman centurion, who, till then, had regarded Jesus Christ with derision, and his doctrine as a delusion. Yet the dying Jesus this day triumphs over infidelity, that closes the heart to every grace ; that renders all the aids of religion fruitless, and that converts even remedies into poisons. This centurion is struck with the wonders attending His death : it is not by demanding miracles like some of the spectators, that he arrives at the knowledge of the truth, it is by considering Jesus Christ ; his power under his reproach, his kindness to his enemies, his patience and majesty under his torments ; his love to men, the innocence of his conduct ; the purity and Divinity of his maxims : this is the great miracle that affects him. He was convinced that deceit would not have had recourse to so gloomy and repulsive a method to seduce

men; that it would have flattered either their passions or their pride; that it would have proposed, like other philosophers, a doctrine more agreeable to the passions, or more flattering to the mind and to curiosity: but that there was no one except the Son of God who could procure disciples through the cross; attract men, by proposing to them only persecutions and sufferings; by prohibiting every pleasure, and promising them no other recompence in this life for their attachment to his doctrines than tears, crosses, and sufferings; that it was only the Sovereign of all hearts who could claim the honour to attract all men by a strict and humbling law, which appeared calculated to discourage every one, or who could come to establish a new worship, by means the most proper to overturn and annihilate it: "Truly this was the Son of God."

Finally, The third description of sinners, whom Jesus Christ converted upon the cross, were a company of idle spectators, attracted to Calvary only by curiosity. Free from the passions which animated the scribes and pharisees, they opposed no other obstacle to Divine grace than a criminal unconcern respecting their salvation, generally more difficult to surmount than the most criminal passions; affected with the spectacle of the Saviour's sufferings, and the abundant blessings which flowed with his blood, they feel their hearts at once changed and broken with godly sorrow: "They returned smiting their breasts" (Luke xxiii. 48).

And shall I dare to inquire, my brethren, if we do not find in these three descriptions of sinners the resemblance of those who attend to the recital and spectacle of the Saviour's sufferings? Scandalous sinners, laden with crimes, who, like the two malefactors crucified by the side of Jesus Christ, this day come to Calvary, and to the sacred spectacle re-acted in our temples, only as to a public execution, who regard this holy, this happy day, which the church consecrates to the mystery of the Saviour's bitter pains, and in which all public amusements

are suspended, as a grievous yoke which a vain religion imposes—who murmur at it, and count the moments, as if they were themselves upon a cross; infidel sinners, who assist, like the centurion, at this religious spectacle, only to fulfil the duties of their post, to observe the decorum which their rank imposes on them, and not to fail in what all the world expects from them; but who secretly regard the cross as foolishness, and perhaps deride the sufferings of Jesus Christ, and the piety and public mourning of believers: finally, worldly and idle sinners attracted only by curiosity to the recital of the Saviour's death, who bring with them neither faith, nor contrition, nor a desire of a more holy life; who follow the multitude, and come to Calvary only as spectators, and because the crowd run thither, and the world itself drags them thither in its train.

Renew therefore this day in their behalf, O my Saviour! the miracles wrought at Calvary: the moment in which Thou expiest, is the moment of favour and mercy. From thy pierced side flow streams of blessings capable of cleansing the most defiled, and the most rebellious souls. Every thing is favourable to sinners at the foot of Thy cross: thine hands are stretched out to receive them; thine heart is open and ready to pardon them; the extreme thirst which thou hast for their salvation; the loud cries which thou addressdest on their behalf to the throne of thy Father. This, O my God! is the day of thy mercy. From the height of thy sacred cross, still cast some of those vivifying regards upon the sinners who surround thee, and consecrate the remembrance of this great day by some of those striking conversions, which shall display the virtue of thy blood, and the perpetuity of thy sacrifice! The third testimony which Jesus upon the cross, bears to the truth of his miracles, is the renewing of them.

In the fourth place, He bears testimony to the truth of his innocence and purity, by praying for his enemies. Indeed, my brethren, the most unequivocal evidence of holiness is to love those who insult us, to pray for the salvation of

those who wish to destroy us, and to heap blessings upon those who load us with curses and reproaches. Now, this is the great testimony that Jesus Christ bears this day to his innocence: He dies for those who crucify him: He dies entreating his Father to shew favour to his enemies. He looks not with contempt upon their fury and insults; that would have been to suffer like a philosopher: He upbraids them not with his favours and with their ingratitude; that would have been to suffer like a weak man: He threatens them not with his power; that would have been to suffer like a vain man: He comforts not himself with the hope of their punishment; that would have been to suffer like one keenly mortified: He does not even complain of their excessive barbarity; that would have been to suffer like a vulgar person. He prays for them; He is occupied solely with the thoughts of their salvation; He seems in that last moment to forget his most faithful disciples; He asks for nothing on their behalf from his Father; He thinks only of his enemies; He prays and He speaks only on their behalf. It is for them alone that He entreats favours from his Father; and this is to suffer like the God-man: they curse him, and He blesses them: they demand his death, and He implores their pardon: they imprecate upon themselves and upon their children, the guilt of his blood; but He does not even desire it to be imputed to them.

“ Father (He said), forgive them, for they know not what they do.” Remember, O my Father! that the blood of this new covenant, which they this day shed, introduces them into the number of thy children—that through the price of the sacrifice which I offer Thee, my murderers may become my co-heirs and brethren—that thou art no longer a Judge armed to destroy them, but a Father always ready to save them; and that by fastening me to a cross, they have erected an asylum, which was to secure them from thy thunders and vengeance. “ Father, forgive them:” Regard not the hands which have pierced me; look only

upon the blood which flows from my wounds, to appease thy justice, and to blot out the crimes of those who immolate me. " Father, forgive them : " They know not as yet that thou hast sent me : forgive these blind creatures who think they glorify thy Name, by putting me to death ; they know not that the blood which they shed is about to sanctify the whole world—that the victim which they sacrifice, is the price of the salvation of all men—that the cross to which they have attached me, is about to become the life and the resurrection of those who sleep in the shades of death, the remedy of all the calamities of the human race, which is about to diffuse throughout the earth, the knowledge of thy Name, and to form among all nations a people who will worship thee in spirit and in truth. But thou, holy Father ! who seest the great benefits which the world will derive from my cross, impute not to them a fault so pregnant with happiness ; and forgive them the guilt of my death, in consideration of the inestimable blessings which through it are about to descend upon the earth ; " for they know not what they do : " they know not that by putting me to death, they are about to restore me to the glory of immortality—that by blotting out my name from the land of the living, they are about to exalt it above principalities and powers—that by rejecting me, they are about to make me known to all nations—that by refusing to acknowledge me as King, they are about to establish me the Prince of the world to come, the Judge of every tribe, the Lord of all, and to confirm to me all power in heaven and in earth. But thou, holy Father ! who hast connected the glory which thou hast promised me, with my ignominy and sufferings, forgive these ignorant creatures who contribute, without their knowledge, to the exaltation of my Name, and to the increase of my kingdom : " for they know not what they do." They know not that my death is about to fill up the measure of their fathers—that the days are coming upon them, when those will be called happy who have never borne, when Jerusalem is about to become a dreadful

solitude, when its altar will be destroyed, its temple be forsaken and converted into ruins; its citizens wanderers and fugitives; and thine inheritance, which they have defiled with innocent blood, be given up to an eternal malediction. But thou, righteous Father! who preparest for them those days of visitation and wrath, be satisfied with those temporal calamities with which thou art about to afflict them: save the remnant of Israel; spare the branches of a holy root; save a people whom thou hast chosen; destroy not for ever my brethren according to the flesh, who are bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh; withdraw not thy salvation from Judah, from whence salvation is come forth; spare the children of the saints—gather together at length the dispersed of Israel—re-unite them in these last days to the trunk from which they have separated themselves—call them back to the bosom of thy true Jerusalem, to the end that there may be but one fold and but one Shepherd, and that they may, with all nations, offer unto Thee—not rams and bulls, but the mystical signs of the great sacrifice which I this day offer to thy glory. This is the fourth testimony which Jesus Christ, upon the cross, bears to the truth of his innocence,—He prays for his enemies.

Finally, He in the last place, bears testimony to the truth of his royalty, by conquering the world through the cross. The world had denied him the reality and glory of his kingdom: it had saluted him as a King only in derision: every emblem of royalty was only a new insult; the sceptre, a worthless reed; the purple, an ignominious robe; the crown, a crown of thorns; the throne, a cross of infamy, both the object of his ignominy and of his sufferings. But these ignoble emblems of so humbling a royalty, become this day the glorious insignia of his power and of his empire. That feeble reed which serves him for a sceptre, will soon overturn every profane altar, cast down every idol, confound every sect, annihilate every empire, smite the giants of the earth, and destroy all knowledge which exalteth itself against the knowledge of God. That crown,

which is placed on him, and causes his pain and confusion, will adorn the head of Cæsars more pompously than laurels, or than the most brilliant diadems ; and a sovereign of the first throne in the world, and of the most noble blood in the universe, shall go and expose his life and liberty to, bring its precious remains in triumph to this country ; more glorious from having enriched his kingdom with this holy and precious treasure, than if he had conquered an empire. That ignominious throne, to which He is nailed, will soon become a throne of glory, to the foot of which princes and sovereigns will come to bow their lofty heads—a throne of power and authority, upon which he will judge all the nations of the earth—a throne of grace and mercy, at the foot of which all nations will find life and salvation—a throne of knowledge and doctrine, from which he will continue unto the end to instruct all mankind, and to teach them the truths relating to eternal life,—finally, a throne of wisdom and counsel, from which this new Solomon will govern all nations in righteousness, peace, and plenty. The power and the reign of the kings of the earth terminate with them : the reign of Jesus Christ begins to shine forth only through his death, and his ignominy is the first source of his greatness and glory. Holy Father ! thy very Son Joseph whom we lament, still lives : the malice of his brethren, which delivered him up, only served to display his grandeur and power : he is come forth from the fatal pit in which envy had buried him ; and all the people of Egypt, and the whole universe, acknowledge his supreme dominion and power : “ Thy son liveth, and he ruleth over all Egypt.”

But, my brethren, all now acknowledge the sovereignty of Jesus Christ : his cross triumphs over heaven and hell—over the blindness of the Jew and the infidelity of the Gentile—over the barbarity of his murderers and the obduracy of a dying malefactor. All nature confesses Him, all creatures acknowledge Him ; while we alone close our hearts against Him, and obstinately say, “ We will not

have this man to reign over us." (Luke xix. 14.) The dead, this day, hear his voice, and come forth from their graves; yet we would still remain buried in the abyss of our dissolute practices, although his powerful voice this day reaches our very hearts from the height of his cross: Arise! ye who sleep the sleep of death—come forth from the depth of your crimes and ignorance; and that Jesus whom you behold crucified for you, will restore to you the life and light which you have lost: "Awake, thou that sleepest and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light!" (Ephes. v. 14.) The rocks are cleft, but our more insensible hearts remain unaffected! The veil of the temple is rent, and the impenetrable veil which is spread over our consciences, that sanctuary of iniquity, and which has so long kept us from confessing to the priest its secret defilement, is neither opened nor rent! * and we still preserve those abominable mysteries hidden within ourselves, which constitute our hearts the temples of demons, the asylum of unclean spirits, and a terrible theatre of remorse, confusion, and trouble! Shall we not at length leave this kingdom of darkness in which we live, to enter into a kingdom of light? Shall we not at length be wearied of having been, until now, the miserable slaves of a world which has no right over us, which is not worthy of us, and which can do nothing for us? And shall we refuse to take Jesus Christ, who has died for us, as our rightful Lord and Sovereign? O my Saviour! what resource can remain from thine infinite mercies for sinners, if all which thou doest for them this day does not excite their love, their contrition, and their gratitude; and if they still obstinately resolve to perish, notwithstanding the way to eternal life which thou openest to them this day through thy blood? Amen.

* See Note F, in Appendix.

SERMON V.

THE BLESSEDNESS OF THE RIGHTEOUS.

MATT V. 5.

Blessed are they that weep, for they shall be comforted.

SIRE,—Were the world here to address you, instead of Jesus Christ, it would doubtless adopt a different language to your majesty.

Happy, it would say, is the prince who has never fought but to conquer; who has seen numerous powers armed against him, only that he might confer upon them a more honourable peace; and who has always been superior both to danger and to victory.

Happy the prince, who, during a long and prosperous reign, enjoys at his leisure the fruits of his glory, the love of his people, the esteem of his enemies, the admiration of the world, the benefit of his conquests, the splendour of his works, the wisdom of his laws, and the pleasing hope of a numerous posterity; and who has nothing left to desire but the long enjoyment of what he possesses.

Thus would the world address you: but, Sire, Jesus Christ does not speak the language of the world.

Jesus says, Happy is he—not who is the admiration of his age, but he—who makes the world to come his chief concern; who lives in the contempt of himself and of every thing transitory, because the kingdom of God is his: “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

Happy is he—not whose reign and actions will be, by history, immortalized in the remembrance of men, but he—

whose tears have effaced his transgressions from the remembrance of God; because he will be eternally consoled: "Blessed are they that weep, for they shall be comforted."

Happy is he—not who has extended the limits of his empire by new conquests, but he—who has confined his desires and his passions within the limits of the law of God, because he will possess a land more durable than the empire of the universe: "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth."

Happy is he—not who is exalted, by the voice of the people, above all the princes who have preceded him, and who enjoys, at his leisure, his greatness and glory, but he—who, finding nothing in a throne worthy of his affections, ceases to seek for perfect happiness in this life, except in the practice of virtue and justice; for he shall be satisfied: "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled."

Happy is he—not upon whom men have conferred the glorious titles of great and invincible, but he—upon whom the miserable will bestow, in the presence of Jesus Christ, the title of a father, or of a benefactor: "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy."

Finally, Happy is he—not who has always been the arbiter of the fate of his enemies, and who has more than once given peace to the world, but he—who has been able to confer it upon himself, and to banish from his heart the vices and the disordered affections which disturbed his tranquillity, for he shall be called a child of God: "Blessed are the peace-makers, for they shall be called the sons of God."

Such, Sire, are the persons whom Jesus Christ pronounces happy: and the Gospel knows no happiness upon the earth, but what results from virtue and innocence.

Great God! it is not therefore that long course of unexampled prosperity with which Thou hast favoured his glorious reign, that can make him the happiest of kings. This makes him great; but it does not render him happy.

His piety has commenced his felicity. Whatever does not sanctify man, is incapable of constituting his happiness. Whatever does not, O my God ! place Thee in the heart, only places therein either a deceitful good which leaves it empty, or a real evil which fills it with inquietude : a good conscience is the only source of true felicity.

It is to this truth, my brethren, that the church this day confines all the fruit of the solemnity which it offers to us. As the common error that the life of the saints is cheerless and unhappy, is one of the principal artifices which the world employs to prevent our imitating them ; the church, by this day renewing their remembrance, reminds us, that not only do they enjoy an immortal felicity in heaven, but also that they were the only happy persons upon the earth : " Blessed are they," &c. That he who bears iniquity in his bosom, always bears therein trouble and dismay ; and that the condition of good men is a thousand times more pleasing and tranquil, even in this world, than that of sinners.

But in what does the present happiness of the righteous consist ? In the first place, it consists in the revelation of the truth which is hidden from the wise of this world ; secondly, in the experience of that love which is denied to the lovers of the world.—In the light of revelation, which sweetens all the afflictions of the faithful, but which renders those of the sinner the more poignant : this is my first point. In the consolations of grace, which calm every passion, and which, being denied to a corrupt heart, leave it a prey to itself : this is the last. Let us unfold these two truths so suited to render virtue amiable, and the example of the saints beneficial. But, before we begin, let us implore the aid of the Holy Spirit.

Part I.—The origin of our troubles may usually be traced to our errors : we are unhappy, said one of the Fathers, only because we form a mistaken estimate of the true nature of good and evil : *Causa laboris ignorantia est.*

(*St. Ambrose.*) The righteous, being children of light, are much happier than sinners, because they are more enlightened. The same knowledge which corrects their judgment, alleviates their sorrows; and revelation, which shews them the world as it is, converts into sources of consolation those very events which persons given up to their passions, find the cause of all their inquietudes.

And to enable you, my brethren, to enter into a truth so honourable to virtue, observe, I pray you, that whether a person converted of God recalls the past, the period of disorder which preceded his repentance; whether he be attentive to that which takes place before his eyes in the world; or whether, finally, he looks forward to futurity, every thing administers to his comfort; every thing confirms him on the side of virtue, which he has espoused; every thing renders his condition infinitely more agreeable than that of a person who leads a life of disorder, and who finds in those three circumstances only secret bitterness and terror.

For, in the first place, whatever the degree in which a sinner may be given up to the transports of his heart, present pleasures do not hurry him along so impetuously as to prevent his sometimes looking back upon those years of iniquity which he has left behind him. Those days of darkness which he devoted to irregularity, have not perished so completely as never to recur to his remembrance. They are importunate images, which trouble and fatigue him; and which, from time to time, rouse him from his lethargy, by exhibiting, at one view, that monstrous assemblage of crimes, which struck him less while he lived in their practice, as he then saw them only in succession. In the twinkling of an eye are presented to his view the favours which he constantly despised; the gracious influences which he always resisted; the unworthy use which he made of a disposition naturally felicitous, and formed as it were for virtue; the follies which cover him with confusion; and

the horrors and abominations upon which his shuddering imagination dares not linger for a moment.

This is what the sinner leaves behind him. He is unhappy if he turns his eyes towards the past. All his felicity is, as it were, included in the present moment: and to be happy, he must be destitute of reflection; he must suffer himself to be led, like the dumb creation, by the attraction of present objects; and he must brutalize or annihilate his reason, if he wishes to preserve his tranquillity. Hence those maxims so unworthy of humanity, yet so common in the world—that too much sense is a miserable advantage—that reflection spoils all the pleasures of life; and that we must be destitute of thought, in order to be happy. O man! did Heaven confer on thee this reason, which enlightens thee, in order to render thee miserable, or to assist thee to seek the truth, which alone can render thee happy? Shall that Divine light, which adorns thy nature, become a source of misery rather than a gift of the Creator? And does it so gloriously distinguish thee from the brute, only to render thy condition more deplorable?

Yes, my brethren, such is the condition of the unbeliever. It is only the delirium of excess, or the total extinction of reason, which can render him happy; and as that state lasts but a moment, no sooner has his mind resumed its calmness and self-possession, than the enchantment ceases, the happiness vanishes, and the man finds himself alone with his conscience and his crimes.

But, how different, O my God! is the condition of one who walketh in thy ways. And how much to be pitied is the world which knows Thee not! In truth, my brethren, the sweetest thoughts of a righteous man are those which recal the past to his remembrance. He therein discovers, it is true, that part of his life which was wholly devoted to the world or to pleasure: and the recollection, I admit, overwhelms him with shame before the holy God, and

draws from him tears of compunction and sorrow. But how great the consolation which he derives even from his sorrows and his tears !

For, my brethren, a person returned to God, cannot recal the whole course of his past wanderings, without noticing the whole procedure of Divine mercy towards him ; the singular ways by which he was gradually led by Divine wisdom to the happy moment of his conversion. So many unexpected circumstances, favours, disgraces, losses, deaths, perfidies, preferences, and afflictions, all regulated by an attentive Providence, to facilitate the breaking off of his chains—that especial care which God exercised over him, even while he pursued his wicked course—that distaste of pleasure which the Divine goodness often excited in him while eagerly engaged in its pursuit—those secret invitations which continually recalled him to duty and to virtue—that internal voice which every where followed him, and which incessantly addressed him, as it formerly did Augustin : Fool, how long wilt thou pursue pleasures incapable of making thee happy ? When wilt thou at once terminate thy disquietudes and thy sins ? What more can be necessary to undeceive thee respecting the world, than that experience which thou hast of thy weariness and misery in its service ? Try if it be not more agreeable to serve Me, and whether I do not satisfy the soul that possesses me ?

This is what the past offers to a person renewed by Divine grace. He discerns the accomplices of his ancient pleasures, still given up by Divine justice to the delusions of the world and of their own passions, while he is chosen, separated, and called to the knowledge of the truth.

With what peace and consolation, my brethren, does this remembrance fill a believer ! He exclaims, with the Prophet, How infinite are Thy mercies, O my God ! Thou hast taken me under thy protection from my mother's womb : Thou hast closely watched over all my ways : what more have I done for Thee than the many to whose eyes

Thou hast not deigned to manifest the severity of thy judgments and of thy justice? O God! how admirable are thy works! And my soul knoweth right well what Thou hast done for its welfare, and what it is indebted to Thee! *Mirabilia opera tua et anima mea cognoscit nimis!* This is the first advantage possessed by the believer: the remembrance of his past infidelities becomes a means of consoling him.

But, in the second place, if the past be to him a source of consolation, that which now passes before his eyes is not less consolatory to his piety. And here, my brethren, you are about to observe how far virtue contributes to the happiness of life; and how the same world which excites all the passions, and consequently all the inquietudes of sinners, becomes the most agreeable and the most consolatory exercise of the faith of the just.

Indeed, my brethren, what is the world, even to worldlings who love it, who appear so enamoured with its pleasures, and who cannot dispense with it?—The world! it is a perpetual servitude, in which no one lives for himself, and in which, to be happy, we must be able to embrace our chains, and to love our bondage. The world! it is a daily vicissitude of events which alternately awaken in the breasts of its partisans, the most violent and distressing passions; fierce animosities, painful perplexities, tormenting fears, jealousies that consume, troubles that overwhelm. The world! it is a land of malediction, in which even pleasures are accompanied by thorns and sorrows. Gambling wearies, by its extravagance and caprice: conversations fatigue, through contrary dispositions and opposite opinions: criminal passions and attachments have their disgusts, their unexpected disasters, their unpleasant rumours; theatrical exhibitions, scarcely finding any among the spectators but minds grossly dissolute, or wholly incapable of being aroused, except by the monstrous excesses of debauchery, become uninteresting when they excite only those delicate passions which give but a distant view

of crimes, and spread snares for the innocent. Finally, the world is a place where hope itself, which is considered so agreeable an emotion, renders every man miserable; where those who have nothing to hope for, think themselves still more wretched; where every thing which amuses, amuses but for a moment; and where *ennui* is generally the most agreeable and supportable destiny which we can expect. Such is the world, my brethren; and this is not that obscure world which is a stranger both to the pleasures of the great, and to the charms of prosperity—both to favour and opulence: it is the world in all its glory; it is the world as displayed at court; it is you, my brethren, who now hear me. Such is the world; and this is not one of those imaginative pictures, to which we find no counterpart in nature. I paint the world after your own hearts; that is to say, as you daily know and experience it.

Such, however, is the place in which every sinner seeks his felicity. This is his country. It is here he wishes to immortalize himself. Such is the world which he prefers to eternal blessings, and to all the promises of revelation. Great God! how righteous art thou in making the passions of men the instruments of their punishment, and in permitting that, as man will not seek his happiness in Thee, who art alone his peace, that he should form a whimsical felicity of his fears, disgusts, *ennui*, and cruel inquietudes!

But that which is so favourable to virtue, my brethren, is this, that the same world which is so wearisome and insupportable to sinners who seek their felicity in it, becomes a source of consolatory reflections to the righteous man, who regards it as a place of exile and a foreign land.

For, in the first place, the inconstancy of the world, so terrible to those who are given up to it, furnishes a thousand motives of consolation to the believer. Nothing appears to him constant and durable upon the earth;—neither the most flourishing fortune, nor the warmest friendship; the

most brilliant reputation, nor the most envied favours He discerns a Sovereign Wisdom, which appears to amuse itself by sporting with men, by elevating some on the ruin of others; by degrading those who were on the top of the wheel, to raise those, who, the moment before, crouched at their feet; by daily bringing forward new heroes upon the theatre of the world, and by eclipsing those who previously acted so brilliant a part; by continually presenting new scenes to the universe. He sees men pass their whole life in agitation, projects, and schemes—always intent either upon deceiving themselves, or upon avoiding deception; always eager and skilful to take advantage of the retreat, the disgrace, or the death of their rivals; and to derive from those lessons, which so strikingly inculcate contempt for the world, new motives to ambition and cupidity; always occupied either with their fears or their hopes; always uneasy, either respecting the present or the future; never tranquil; always labouring for repose, and yet continually removing farther from it.

O man! why art thou so ingenious in making thyself miserable? Such are the thoughts of the believer. Felicity of which thou art in pursuit is secured with less difficulty. It is neither necessary to cross the sea nor to conquer kingdoms to obtain it. Go not out of thyself, and thou wilt be happy.

How consoling do the sorrows attending virtue appear to a good man, when he compares them with the cruel griefs and perpetual agitations of sinners! how much is he pleased that he has found a place of repose and security, while he beholds the lovers of the world still sadly agitated by human passions and hopes! Thus it was formerly with the Israelites—having escaped from the Red Sea, they beheld Pharoah and all the nobles of Egypt at a distance, still at the mercy of the waves; while they, conscious of their security, found the barren paths of the wilderness pleasant and agreeable, and were no longer sensible of the inconveniences of the road; and comparing their condition with

that of the Egyptians, far from complaining and murmuring, they united with Moses in singing that divine song of praise and thanksgiving, in which the wonders and mercies of the Lord are celebrated with so much magnificence.

In the second place, the injustice of the world, so grievous to those who love it, when they see themselves forgotten, neglected, deprived of favours, and sacrificed to unworthy rivals, is another source of consoling reflections to one that despises it, and who feareth none but the Lord. What a sad resource is it to a sinner, who has sacrificed to the world and to his sovereign, his repose, his conscience, his property, his youth, and his health; who has borne with repulses, fatigues and subjections for frivolous hopes, to behold the door to elevation and fortune suddenly shut against him; places torn from him which he had merited, and which he thought he already held; threatened, if he complain, with the loss of those which he possesses; obliged to stoop before more fortunate rivals, and to depend upon those whom he had formerly thought unworthy to receive his commands. Shall he retire from the world to avenge himself by perpetual complaints upon the injustice of men? But what will retirement do for him? it will leave him more leisure, and afford him less diversion, to his grief. Shall he console himself from the similar fate of others? But our misfortunes never seem to ourselves to resemble the misfortunes of others; and besides, what consolation can be derived from feeling our pains renewed, in proportion as we discern in others their image and resemblance? Shall he fortify himself by a vain philosophy, and by the strength of his own mind? Unassisted reason soon looses its haughtiness. We may be philosophers for the public; we are always mere men for ourselves. Shall he seek relief by giving up himself to infamous pleasures and sensualities? The heart, by exchanging its passion, only exchanges its punishment. Shall he seek, in indolence and sloth, a felicity which he could not find in his lively hopes and expectations? A guilty conscience may become

indifferent ; but it is not, on that account, the more easy. We may cease to feel our disgraces and misfortunes ; we always feel our infidelities and crimes. No, my brethren, the miserable sinner is miserable without resource. Every thing fails a worldly mind, when the world itself fails it.

But the righteous man learns to despise the world, from the very contempt which the world has for him. The injustice of men towards him only makes him recollect that he serves a more equitable Sovereign, who can neither be deceived nor prejudiced—who sees in us only that which really exists—who decides our fate only from our hearts, and before whom we need fear only our own consciences : so that we are happy in serving Him ; we need be under no apprehensions from His ingratitude ; every thing which we do for Him is placed to our account ; so far from dissembling, or forgetting our pains and our services, He even keeps an account of our desires ; and nothing is lost with Him, except that which is not done solely for Him.

Now, in these discoveries of revelation, what new sources of consolation are presented to a faithful soul ! How unable is the world, with its repulses and its ill-treatment, to afflict him ! It is then, that, throwing himself into the bosom of God, and regarding, with the eyes of a Christian, the nothingness and vanity of all human things, he feels those inquietudes, inseparable from human nature, suddenly turned into a consoling peace ; a gleam of light shines into the soul, and restores its serenity ; a ray of consolation penetrates his heart, and alleviates all its bitterness. Ah ! my brethren, how sweet to serve Him, who is alone able to confer happiness upon those that obey Him ! O blessed condition of virtue, why art thou so little known of men ! And why art *thou* depicted as a sad and comfortless destiny—*thou* which alone canst console the miseries of this place of exile, and soften all its pains ?

Finally, the judgment of the world, the source of so many griefs to worldly persons, tends still more to con-

sole a faithful soul. For the lovers of the world are punished by being incessantly exposed to the judgment, that is to say, to the censure, the derision, and the malignity of each other. In vain do we despise our fellow-creatures : we wish to be esteemed by the very persons whom we despise. In vain are we elevated above others : elevation only exposes us the more to the notice and discourses of the multitude ; and we more keenly feel the censures of those from whom we had a right to expect homage. In vain do we enjoy the suffrage of the public ; for contempt becomes the more mortifying in proportion as it is uncommon and rare. In vain do we avenge the censures passed upon ourselves, by passing more severe and cutting censures upon others : revenge always supposes a deep sense of injury and of pain ; and, besides, we are far less susceptible of the pleasure of despising others, than of the grief of having been exposed to contempt. Finally, since you live only for the world, and since your pleasures or griefs depend wholly upon it, you cannot be indifferent respecting the judgment which it passes upon you.

Nevertheless, it is in the midst of these contradictions that you must be pleased. Men deny you every thing that truth or vanity ascribes to you : whether birth, talents, or reputation ; public services, or successes ; prudence, or honour. If you bear a great name, they deny it to your ancestors : if you do not succeed in your designs, they accuse you of inability : if you succeed, they ascribe your success to chance, or to the merit of your subalterns ; if you enjoy the public esteem, they appeal from the popular error to the judgment of the judicious : if you possess all the talents which are suited to please, they soon proclaim that you have known how to turn them to advantage, and that you have too well succeeded : if your conduct is irreproachable, they sarcastically ridicule your peculiarities. Finally, whatever you are, whether great or vulgar, prince or subject, the situation the most desirable to your vanity is to be ignorant of the opinion of the world. Such is the

life of worldly persons. The same passions which unite; also divide us: envy blackens our most laudable qualities; and our pleasures meet with censurers even in those who imitate them.

But a true believer is preserved from those inquietudes. As he does not desire the esteem of men, so he has no fear of their contempt: as he does not propose to please them, he is not surprised that he fails in doing so. God is the sole Judge whom he fears, and this consoles him under the judgment of men. His glory is the testimony of his conscience, he seeks his reputation in his duty. He regards the suffrages of men as the snare of virtue, or as the recompence of vice; and, without paying attention to their judgment, he contents himself by exhibiting a good example.—But what do I say, my brethren? The world itself, worldly as it is, and notwithstanding the contempt, censure, and malignity which it bears towards its adorers, is forced to respect the virtues of those by whom it is despised and hated. It attaches to the person of a truly righteous man an indescribable dignity and sanctity, which attracts the veneration, almost the adoration, of worldlings: his intimate union with Christ reflects upon him, as it formerly did upon the three disciples on the holy mountain, a portion of that celestial glory which the Father spread over His beloved Son, and which leaves the world without the power of denying him homage. It is an inalienable privilege which virtue possesses over the hearts of men; and, by a deplorable whimsicality, the world despises the passions which it inspires; and it respects the virtues which it opposes. Not that the esteem of the world, which is itself so worthy of contempt, would be any great consolation to a faithful man. But it consoles him to see the world condemned by the world—pleasures decried by those who pursue them—sinners become the apologists of virtue—and a worldly life miserably spent in doing what it condemns, and in fleeing from what it approves.

61 In this way the present life becomes a source of consoling reflections to a Christian ; and he finds likewise, in the thoughts of the future, those consolations which are turned into secret and continual terrors to the sinner. This is the last advantage which the righteous derive from the light of Revelation. The magnificence of its promises supports and consoles them. They wait for the blessed hope, and the happy moment in which they shall be associated with the church triumphant in heaven—be ever united to their brethren whom they had lost upon the earth—be admitted eternal citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem—be incorporated in that assembly of the elect of God, in which love will be the law which will unite them ; truth, the light which will enlighten them ; and eternity, the only limit to their felicity.

62 These promises are the more consoling to good men, as they are founded upon the truth of God. They know that in sacrificing the present, they sacrifice nothing—that in the twinkling of an eye every thing will have passed away—that every thing which is to have an end cannot endure—that the moment of tribulation ought to be reckoned as nothing, when compared to the eternal weight of glory which God prepares for us ; and that the rapidity of present things does not even deserve that we should reckon the years or the ages of their duration.

63 I know that faith may subsist together with a criminal conduct ; and that sanctifying grace is daily lost, without a sincere submission to the truths which the Spirit of God has revealed to us. But the truth of Revelation, so consoling to a righteous man, is to the sinner, who still believes its doctrines, only an exhaustless source of secret troubles and of cruel terrors. Because the more certain the truths of Revelation appear to *you*, who retain in your remembrance a whole life of disorder ; the more inevitable that punishment must appear with which it threatens sinners who resemble you. All the truth which the holy doctrine presents to your faith, awakens in you new alarms. Those

Divine illuminations, the source of every consolation to the faithful, are within you avenging convictions, which torment and condemn you—which incessantly discover to you what you would never wish to behold—which teach you, in spite of yourselves, that of which you would always wish to be ignorant—which place under your eye that which you would wish never to see. Even your faith already constitutes your punishment. Your religion is, even *here*, if I dare so to speak, your hell; and the more you are persuaded of the truth, the more unholily you live. O God! how great is thy goodness to man, in making virtue necessary to his repose, and in attracting him to Thee, by convincing him that there is no happiness without Thee!

And here, my dear hearer, permit me to recal you to yourself. Although the condition of a guilty person were not to be so dreadful in the future world, see whether it appears deserving of envy even in this: his afflictions are without resource, his misery without consolation, his very pleasures without tranquillity; his inquietudes respecting the present, infinite; his thoughts respecting the past and the future, gloomy and wretched; his faith occasions all his distresses; his knowledge, his despair. What a situation! What a sad condition! What dreadful changes does a single sin produce within and without! How much does it cost him to prepare eternal misery for himself! And must it not be admitted that the ways of the world, and of the passions, are still more painful than those of the Gospel; and that the kingdom of hell, if we may so speak, suffers greater violence than the kingdom of heaven? O innocence! how great are the blessings which thou bringest to man! O man! how much dost thou lose when thou lovest thy innocence! Thou lovest all the consolations which constitute the sweetest employment of the righteous; but thou deprivest thyself also of all the pleasures of grace, which contribute to render the destiny of good men so worthy of envy even in this life.

Part II.—When we promise worldly persons, said St. Augustin, consolation and pleasure in the observance of the law of God, they consider our promises as a kind of pious language which we adopt in order to commend virtue; and as those who have never tasted those pure desires are incapable of conceiving of them, we are obliged, in reply, to inquire of them, continued that Father, “How would you have us persuade you?” We cannot say to you, “Taste and see that the Lord is good;” since a sick and disordered heart, cannot taste of heavenly things. Present us a person that loves them, and he will feel the force of all that we say.

My present design, therefore, is not so much to set forth all the secret operations of grace in the hearts of the righteous, as to contrast the happy situation in which they are placed in this world, with the sad condition of sinners; and by this comparison to encourage virtue, and to complete the confusion of vice. Now, Divine grace affords two kinds of consolation to good men in this world: the one inward and secret, the other outward and sensible; both so essential to the happiness of this life, that no pleasure upon the earth is able to supply their place.

The first advantage which Divine grace affords to a faithful man, is to establish a solid peace in his mind, and to reconcile him with himself. For, my brethren, we all bear within ourselves the natural principles of equity, modesty, and uprightness. We are born, as saith the Apostle, with the law written in our hearts. If virtue is not our first propensity, we feel at least that it is our principal duty. In vain do the passions, at times, secretly undertake to persuade us, that we are born for pleasure, and that the propensities which nature has implanted within us, and which each one finds in himself cannot be criminal. This foreign persuasion can never confirm a man in his criminal practices. It is a mere desire, for he would wish that every thing which pleases were lawful: but it is not a real conviction. It is mere talk, because he glories in appearing

superior to vulgar maxims ; but it is not his real opinion. Hence we always bear an incorruptible judge in our bosom, which continually espouses the side of virtue, in opposition to our dearest propensities ; which mingles with our most violent passions, the troublesome ideas of duty ; and which renders us miserable, in the very midst of our pleasures and abundance.

Such is the miserable state of a polluted and defiled conscience. The sinner is a secret and a constant accuser of himself : he every where drags about with him a source of inquietude, which nothing can calm. He is miserable because he is unable to conquer his irregular propensities : still more so, in not being able to stifle the harassing reproaches of his conscience. Led astray by his weaknesses, recalled by his convictions, he opposes the very sin which he commits, he reproaches himself with his criminal passion at the very moment that he indulges it. What shall he do ? Shall he oppose his convictions to appease the clamours of his conscience ? Shall he suspect the truth of revelation in order the more quietly to enjoy his criminal desires ? But incredulity is a state still more dreadful than a state of weakness. To live without God, worship, principles, or hope ! To believe that the most abominable crimes, and the purest virtues, are mere names ! To regard all men as worthless and ridiculous puppets, made to move and speak upon a comic stage, and as only designed to serve as an amusement to the spectators ! To regard himself as the work of chance, and the eternal property of nothing ! These thoughts possess something so indescribably gloomy and miserable, that the mind cannot confront them without horror ; and it is certain that unbelief is rather the result of the sinner's despair than the resource of sin. What shall he then do ? Continually obliged to flee from himself lest he should be left a prey to his conscience, he roves from object to object, from passion to passion, from precipice to precipice. He seems to think that he can make up, by their variety, the void and insufficiency of his pleasures :

there is none which he does not try. But in vain does he alternately offer his heart to every creature: all the objects of his passions answer him, says St. Augustin, 'Do not deceive thyself by loving us: we are not the felicity which thou seekest, we are incapable of making thee happy; raise thyself above the creatures; ascend to the heavens, and see whether He who made us is not greater and more amiable than we.' Such is the condition of the sinner.

Not that the righteous enjoy so constant a tranquillity in this life, as never to experience troubles, disgusts, and inquietudes. But they are passing clouds, which occupy merely the surface of their souls. A serene calm continually reigns within them;—peace of conscience, singleness of heart, evenness of temper, lively confidence, quiet resignation, a calm of the passions, and a universal peace, which commences, even in this life, the felicity of the innocent. Vain creatures! what influence do you possess over a heart which you did not form, and which was not made for you! Peace of mind is the first consolation derived from Divine grace.

The second is this, That love sweetens the rigours of the Law to the righteous, and, agreeably to the promise of Jesus Christ, converts his yoke, which appears insupportable to sinners, into a sweet and consoling yoke to them. For a faithful man loves his God more strongly, tenderly, and durably, than he had loved the world and the creatures. The most difficult things therefore that he undertakes for God, either occasion him no difficulty or constitute his sweetest care. For such is the nature of sacred love when it reigns in the heart; it either sweetens the pains which it occasions, or it converts them into sacred pleasures. Hence a person that loves God, forgives an enemy with joy, suffers trials with confidence, mortifies the deeds of the body with pleasure, flees from the world with delight, prays with comfort, and fulfils his duties with a holy complacency. The more his love to God increases, the more the yoke of duty is sweetened. The more he loves, the

greater his felicity : for no state is more happy than that of loving what is become necessary to us.

But the more the sinner loves the world, the greater is his misery : for the more he loves the world, the more his passions are multiplied—his desires are enkindled—his projects are embarrassed, and his inquietudes are embittered. His love occasions all his misery : the liveliness of his desires is the source of all his pains, because the world which occasions them never affords him a remedy. The more he loves the world, the more his pride is wounded by any preference that is shewn to others ; the more his haughtiness is susceptible of an injury, the more a defeated project confounds him, the more a desire crossed afflicts him, and the more an unexpected loss overwhelms him. The greater his love to the world, the more pleasures become necessary to him ; and as no pleasure can satisfy his vast desires, his *ennui* becomes insupportable ; for *ennui* arises from the sameness of every returning pleasure ; and the world, with all its amusements, because it is still but the world, is forced to complain of weariness.

And do not think, that, in order to honour virtue, I here affect to exaggerate the misery of worldly minds. I know the world appears to possess felicity ; and that in the midst of the whirlpool of cares, movements, fears, and inquietudes, we always perceive a small number of happy persons whose happiness we envy, and who seem to enjoy a sweet and an easy condition. But penetrate these vain exteriors of happiness and joy ; and you will discern real griefs,—hearts rent with troubles, and consciences grievously tormented. Approach those who appear happy in the world, and you will be surprised to find them gloomy and uneasy, painfully dragging along the burden of a guilty conscience. Harken to them in those serious and quiet moments which, the passions become cool, leave them some use of their reason : they all agree that they are unhappy ; the glory of their fortune only shines at a distance, and appears deserving of envy only to those who are ignorant

of its nature. They admit, that, in the midst of their pleasures and prosperity, they have been strangers to pure and real joy; that the world, when a little examined, is no longer any thing; that they are themselves surprised that any who know it can love it; and that none are happy in this life but those who can dispense with it and engage in the service of God. Some sigh for an opportunity for an honourable retreat: others daily propose to themselves a more moral and Christian conduct. All allow that good men are happy: all men wish to become such, and thus bear testimony against themselves. They do not run after pleasures, they are forced along by them. It is no longer inclination, but custom and weakness, which retain them in the bonds of the world and of sin. They are sensible of this; they complain of it; they admit it: and yet they give up themselves to this sad destiny. Deceitful world! make those happy, if thou canst, who serve thee; and *then* I will forsake the law of the Lord, to depend upon the vanity of thy promises.

Have you who listen to me, my dear hearers, much advanced your felicity, during the many years you have served the world? Put into one scale all the agreeable days and moments which you have passed therein, and into the other all the griefs which you have therein experienced; and see which will turn the balance. You have perhaps said, in certain moments of pleasure and of the frenzied delirium of excess, "It is good to be here:" but it was only in a fit of delirium, which was of no duration; for the next moment discovered the delusion, and again plunged you into your former inquietudes. While I address you, interrogate your hearts: Are we easy? Is nothing wanting to our felicity? Is there nothing that we fear? Do we not sensibly feel that God is not with us? Should we wish to live and die such as we now are? Are we satisfied with the world? Are we unfaithful to the Author of our being without feeling remorse? There are twelve hours in the day; are they all equally agreeable? And have we hitherto suc-

ceeded in quieting our consciences in a course of wickedness.

Even when you plunged to the bottom of the abyss of corruption to extinguish your remorse, and when you thought to stifle, by the excesses of iniquity, that remnant of faith which still pleaded within you in behalf of virtue, did not the Lord command the serpent, as He saith in His prophet, to go and bite you even in the bottom of the sea (Amos ix. 5), into which you had cast yourselves to avoid it; and have you not felt the secret gnawing of the devouring worm? *Et si celaverint se ab oculis meis in profundum mari, ibi mandabo serpenti et mordebit eos.* Were not the days which you consecrated to God, by some religious duties, and by the renewal of your peace of conscience at confession, the happiest of your life; and could you be said to live, except when you maintained a pure conscience, and walked with God? No, said the prophet, with a holy indignation; the God whom we adore is not a deceiver, or one incapable of comforting those who serve Him, like the gods whom they adore: *Non enim est Deus noster ut dii eorum, et inimici nostri sunt judices.*

Great God! what is man, that he should spend his whole life in a ceaseless struggle with himself; that he should wish to be happy without Thee, in spite of Thee, and by declaring himself against Thee; that he should feel his misfortune, and love it—should know his true felicity, and flee from it? What is man, then, O my God! and who is able to comprehend the depth of his ways, and the eternal contradictions of his errors?

But may I not, my brethren, complete that which I proposed, and shew you what renders the condition of good men still more deserving of our wishes; namely, that when inward consolations fail them, they have the exterior helps of piety;—the support of sacraments, which to the sinner, obliged to approach them, are only a sad attention to decorum that incommodes and embarrasses him,—the examples of the saints, and the history of their wonderful

actions, which the church constantly places before our eyes, and from which the sinner turns away his eyes through the fear of reading his own condemnation,—the adorable mysteries daily presented upon our altars, and which often leave to the sinner only the regret of having profaned them with his presence,—the holy songs and prayers of the church, which, to the sinner, are converted into a sad weariness,—and finally, the comfort of the sacred Scriptures, in which the sinner only finds threatenings and anathemas?

What a real relaxation, my brethren, to a believer when, on coming out from the vain conversation of the world, where the discourse turned wholly on the elevation of a family—on the magnificence of an edifice—on those who enjoy a brilliant rank in the world—on public calamities—on the incapacity of those who are at the head of affairs—on the events of war, and the faults with which they daily accuse those in authority; finally, where, being earthly, they have spoken only of the earth; what a relaxation is it to a believer when, in order to respire a little from the fatigue of such vain discourse, he takes the book of the law in his hand, in which he every where discovers that it would not profit a man though he were to gain the whole world, if he should lose his soul—that the most boasted conquests fall into forgetfulness with the vanity of the conqueror—that the heavens and the earth will pass away—that the kingdoms of the world and all their glory will decay like a garment, but that God alone will endure for ever, and that therefore it is to Him alone they should attach themselves! Fools, saith the believer with the prophet (Psalm cxix. 85), have related fables to me, O my God; but how different are they from thy law!

And verily, my brethren, how many consoling promises present themselves in those holy books! How many powerful motives to virtue! How many excellent precautions against vice! How many instructive events! How many blessed arrows that wound the soul! What ideas of the greatness of God, and of the misery of man! What pic-

tures of the odiousness of sin, and of the vain felicity of sinners ! We have no need of your alliance, replied Jonathan and the Jews formerly to the people of Sparta : we have the sacred books in our hands, which serve us instead of consolation, and we can do without the help of men. (1 Macc. xii. 9.) And do you know, my brethren, who are the persons that speak this language ? The unfortunate remains of the cruelty of Antiochus, who were wandering in the mountains of Judea, stripped of their goods and fortunes ; driven from Jerusalem and from the temple, where the abomination of idols had succeeded to the sacrifices of the Holy God ; and though scarcely delivered from so afflictive a state, they have need of nothing, because they had the sacred books in their hands : *Nos, cum nullo horum indigeremus, habentes solatio sanctos libros qui sunt in manibus nostris.* And in so new an extremity, surrounded on every side with hostile nations and retaining in the midst of their armies neither the ark of Israel, nor the holy tabernacle, still weeping over the recent death of the invincible Judas, who was the saviour of the people and the terror of the uncircumcised ; having seen their wives and children slain before their eyes ; themselves daily on the point of sinking, either under the perfidy of false brethren, or the ambushes of enemies, but the book of the law alone sufficed to console and defend them ; and they thought they could do without the assistance which an ancient alliance gave them a right to implore : *Nos, cum nullo horum indigeremus, habentes solatio sanctos libros qui sunt in manibus nostris.*

After this I am not surprised, my brethren, that the primitive disciples of the Gospel forgot, through the comfort of the Scriptures, all the violence of persecutions ; and, as they could not bring themselves to lose sight of that sacred book during their life, that they should desire that the same tomb which contained themselves, should also inclose it, as a kind of pledge to their ashes of the immortality which it had promised them ; and to

present it, as it should seem, to Jesus Christ at the day of His revelation, as their title to the heavenly felicity, and to all the promises made to the righteous.

Such are the consolations of the faithful upon the earth. How terrible is it therefore, my brethren, to live at a distance from God, and under the tyranny of sin; continually at variance with ourselves; strangers to real joy; often as destitute of inclination to sinful pleasure as to virtue; abhorred of men, through the baseness of our passions; insupportable to ourselves, through our whimsical desires; detested of God, through the horrors of our consciences; without the comfort of sacraments, since our crimes exclude us from them; without the consolation of the sacred books, since we find in them only anathemas and threatenings; without the resource of prayer, since a dissolute life either prohibits it or causes us to neglect it! What then is the sinner, but the rejected of heaven and of earth?

Besides, my brethren, do you know what reprobates will regret at that day, when it shall be rendered to every one according to his works? You perhaps think that it will be their past felicity, and that they will say, 'Our good days are all over; and the world in which we passed such agreeable moments, is no more: the duration of our pleasures has resembled that of a dream: our happiness is terminated, and our punishment is about to commence.' You mistake; this will by no means be their language. Listen to what they say, and to what the Spirit of God assures us they will one day declare: 'We never tasted real joy in our criminal pursuits; we always walked in disagreeable and painful paths: and yet these, alas! were only the beginning of our misery and pains: *Ambulavimus vias difficiles*' (Wisdom v. 7). We wearied ourselves in the ways of iniquity: our passions were, at all times, a thousand times more grievous than the most austere virtues could have been; and it cost us more to ruin than it would have done to save ourselves, and to have been made worthy to arise this day with the elect in the abodes of immorta-

lity : *Lassati sumus in via iniquitatis et perditionis*. Fools! to have purchased, by a sad and unhappy life, the misery that will never terminate. *Nos insensati!* (Wisdom v. 4.)

Do you then wish to live happy upon the earth, my dear hearers? live as Christians. Godliness is profitable unto all things. Innocence is the source of true felicity. Turn on every side, there is no peace to the wicked, saith our God. Try every pleasure, it will carry with it that source of weariness and grief which you every where bear along with you. No longer regard, therefore, the condition of the good as a mournful and disagreeable one; do not judge of their happiness by appearances which deceive you. You behold their tears; but you behold not the invisible hand which wipes them away: you behold their flesh groaning under the yoke of repentance; but you do not behold the gracious unction which sweetens it; you see sad and austere manners; but you see not a conscience continually joyful and easy. They resemble the ark of Israel in the wilderness: it appeared to be clothed only with the skins of animals: its appearance was mean and uncomely. Such is the condition of this sad wilderness. But if you could enter into their hearts, into the Divine sanctuary, what new wonders would present themselves to your view! You would find it lined with pure gold: you would behold the glory of God with which it is filled: you would admire the sweetness of perfumes, and the fervour of prayers which continually ascend therein before the Lord; the sacred fire constantly burning upon the altar; the silence, peace, and majesty which reigned within it; and the Lord himself, who hath chosen it for His abode, and who has made it His chief delight.

May their condition affect you with a holy emulation. It only rests with you to resemble them. They were, perhaps, formerly accomplices in your pleasures; why can you not become the imitators of their repentance? Establish, at length, a solid peace in your heart: begin to be weary of yourselves. Hitherto you have only half-lived;

for to be unable to live at peace with ourselves, is not to live. Return to your God who now calls you, and waits for you : banish iniquity from your souls, and you will banish the source of your pains ; you will enjoy peace of mind, you will live happy upon the earth ; and that temporal happiness will only be the beginning of an eternal felicity. Amen.

SERMON VI.

ON A STATE OF LUKEWARMNESS.

LUKE IV. 38.

Jesus, having left the synagogue, entered into the house of Simon, whose wife's mother had a great fever.

Nothing more naturally represents the condition of a lukewarm and languishing soul, than the state of infirmity in which the Gospel of the day describes Peter's wife's mother. Lukewarmness and indolence in the ways of God, connected with a life free from gross crimes, is a kind of secret and dangerous fever, which gradually undermines the energies of the soul, represses all its good inclinations, enervates every faculty, insensibly corrupts the whole inner man, changes his tastes and his propensities, diffuses bitterness over every duty, excites a disgust of every real good, and of all wholesome and sacred aliment, consumes from day to day his life and substance, and finally terminates in inevitable death.

This languor in the ways of God becomes the more dangerous, in consequence of its being scarcely perceptible. Exemption from dissolute manners, in this state of infidelity, confirms us: that exterior regularity of conduct which attracts the praise that is due to virtue, flatters us: the secret parallel which we draw between our manners and the irregular practices of those sinners who are enslaved by the world and by their passions, completes our blindness: we regard our state, it is true, as an imperfect state, but as a state always certain of salvation, since the only

thing with which our consciences reproach us is a degree of indolence, of remissness, of indulgence, of self-love, or of some slight infidelity which does not destroy the soul.

Yet since the sacred Scriptures represent the apostate and the lukewarm soul as equally rejected of God, and since they pronounce the same anathema upon him who despises the work of God, and upon him who performs it with negligence; the state of the lukewarm in the ways of God, must be a state very uncertain of salvation, both on account of the dispositions which it now creates in the soul, and on account of those to which sooner or later it infallibly leads.

I say, in the first place, on account of the dispositions which it now creates in the soul; namely, a degree of indolence, of self-love, of dislike to virtue, of misimprovement of grace communicated, of deliberate contempt of every thing which we do not think important in duty; dispositions which form a state very uncertain of salvation;—secondly, on account of those to which lukewarmness sooner or later conducts us, which are forgetfulness of God, followed by gross and open transgressions.

I propose to establish two principal truths upon this subject which will set forth the whole danger of a lukewarm and unfaithful life; and which, on account of their importance, will furnish the subject of two different discourses;—The first, That it is very doubtful whether the lukewarm soul preserves the sanctifying grace and holiness which it thinks it preserves, and in which it confides. The second is, That, even though it were less doubtful whether it still retains before God the grace of sanctification, or whether it has lost it, it is at least certain that it cannot retain it long.

The uncertain continuance of righteousness in a lukewarm state, is the truth which will be the subject of the first discourse.

The certain fall of the lukewarm, is the truth concerning which I shall instruct you in the succeeding discourse.

Part I.—"If we say that we have no sin," saith the Apostle, "we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." The purest virtue is therefore, in the present state, never free from stain. Man, full of darkness and passion since the Fall, cannot be always so attentive to order as never to mistake or to err; or be always so affected with true and invisible good, as never to suffer himself to be deceived by apparent good, which makes such sudden and such lively impressions upon our senses, and which always finds propensities within us favourable to their dangerous seductions.

That fidelity which the law of God requires from righteous souls does not therefore exclude a thousand imperfections inseparable from the condition of our nature, and from which the most attentive piety cannot protect itself; but these imperfections are of two kinds:—*Those* which escape us through frailty—which partake much less of infidelity than of oversight, in which the power of depravity has a greater share than the consent of the will, and which, saith St. Augustin, the Lord leaves in the most faithful souls to promote their humility, to excite their groans, to rekindle their desires, to wean them from their place of exile, and to excite their hope of deliverance;—and *those* which please us, which we justify, which we think it impossible to renounce, which we consider necessary to soften the asperities of virtue, and which we think possess nothing criminal, because we do not consider them as vices; which enter into our deliberate plan of conduct and which form that state of indolence and lukewarmness in the ways of God which occasion the damnation of so many persons both in the world and among the different religious orders,—persons besides who were born with the principles of virtue, with a horror of vice, with a fund of religion and of the fear of God, and with dispositions favourable to salvation*.

* See Note G, in Appendix.

Now this state of coldness and of infidelity; this constant negligence, that is tranquil respecting every thing which does not appear to us essential to our duty; this ready compliancé with our propensities, when they do not appear actual crimes; in a word, this life of caprice, of indulgence, and of self-love, so congenial with our nature, and so common among those who make a public profession of piety—so safe in appearance, and so glorious even in the eyes of men, and to which a common mistake attaches the name of virtue and of regularity, is a state very uncertain of salvation; it has its source in a disordered heart, in which the Holy Spirit no longer presides; and the whole of revelation leads us to think that a soul of this character is, without being aware of it, already fallen from the grace and righteousness which it thinks it retains: First, because the desire of perfection essential to Christian piety, is extinguished in the heart; Secondly, because the rules of faith, which distinguish a crime from a mere offence, almost always uncertain respecting other sinners, are infinitely more so respecting the lukewarm and unfaithful soul; Thirdly, because of all the evidences of an ardent and habitual love, there does not remain a single one in such a soul. Let us pursue these truths; they are deserving of our attention.

Every Christian is obliged to aim at the perfection of his state. I say *obliged*, for although the degree of perfection is not expressed in the precept, yet to aim at perfection, or to go on to perfection, is a Divine command, and a duty absolutely binding on every faithful soul. “Be perfect,” saith Jesus Christ, “because your heavenly Father is perfect.” One thing only is needful, said St. Paul; it is, *To forget all that I have hitherto done*—and what did he forget, my brethren? his infinite labours, his continual sufferings, his apostolic course, the numerous nations he had converted to the faith, the many illustrious churches he had planted, the abundant revelations made to him, and the many miracles he had wrought—and in-

cessantly to press towards all that remains for me yet to do. A desire of perfection, continual efforts to attain it, holy solicitude respecting the numerous obstacles which arrest us in our course, are not therefore to be considered as mere matters of advice, or as a practice reserved for the cloisters and the deserts; but they form what is essential to the state of the Christian, and to the life of faith upon earth.

For the life of faith maintained by the just, is an incessant desire to have the reign of God accomplished in our hearts—a holy eagerness to form within ourselves a perfect resemblance to Jesus Christ, and to grow up to the fulness of the new man—a continual sigh excited by the inward feeling of our misery, and by that weight of corruption which oppresses our souls and causes them still to bear so many marks of the earthly Adam—a daily conflict between the law of the Spirit, which would constantly raise us above our sensual affections, and the law of the flesh, which incessantly draws us towards ourselves. Such is the state of Christian faith and righteousness: such is the principle and spirit of your vocation. The austerities of anchorites, the silence and solitude of the deserts, and the poverty of the cloisters, are not required of you; but you are required to labour daily to subdue those desires which are opposed to the law of God,—to mortify the rebellious propensities which are so reluctant to bend under the yoke of duty,—in a word, to advance towards a perfect conformity to Jesus Christ: such is the measure of perfection to which Divine grace calls you, and such is the most essential obligation of a righteous soul.

Now, from the time that you give yourselves up to all your natural propensities, provided they do not proceed to the visible and gross violation of the precept—that you limit yourselves to the essential things of the law—that you assign to yourselves a plan and a state of lukewarmness and negligence—that you, from deliberate purpose, decline carrying your fidelity farther—that you say that you cannot

endure a more retired and exact life; from that time you renounce the desire of perfection—you no longer propose to make incessant advances towards that degree of righteousness and purity to which you are called of God, and to which his grace does not cease secretly to urge you—you no longer groan under those miseries and infirmities which delay you in your way—you no longer desire the reign of God to be consummated in your heart. Therefore from hence you abandon the important work of sanctification for which you are commanded to labour—you neglect the care of your soul—you do not enter into the design of Divine grace—you arrest its holy impressions—you are no longer Christians: that is to say, that that disposition alone, that formal design to limit yourselves to essentials, and to regard all the rest as praiseworthy excesses and as superabundant works, is a state of sin and of death, since it is an open contempt of that great commandment which obliges us to be perfect; that is, to labour to become so.

Yet when we come to instruct you respecting Christian perfection, you regard that perfection as the portion of the cloisters and of solitudes, and you scarcely listen to our instructions upon the subject. You deceive yourselves, my brethren: retired souls embrace indeed certain means of mere advice, such as fasts, acts of austerity, watchings to obtain the mortification of the passions, to which we are all called. They engage to observe a perfection of means which do not belong to our condition, I admit; but the ultimate perfection to which these means lead, which is the government of the affections—the contempt of the world—the denial of ourselves—the subjection of the senses and of the flesh to the spirit—the renewal of the heart, is a perfection belonging to every state, an obligation binding on every Christian, and the vow of our baptism: therefore to renounce this perfection, by willingly restricting our exertions to a meek, tranquil, sensual, and worldly life—a life merely exempt from gross crimes—is to renounce the Christian vocation, and to change the grace of faith which makes us

members of Christ, into an ignoble sloth. This is the first reason.

But though this state of lukewarmness were not so uncertain of salvation, on account of the extinction, in lukewarm and faithless souls, of that desire of perfection which is essential to the Christian life, it would be so through the inability in which it leaves us of discriminating between those infidelities which may lead to crimes and those which remain mere failings.

For, though it is true that all sins are not sins unto death, as St. John saith, and that Christian morality speaks of some faults which only grieve the Holy Spirit, while others altogether quench his fire within us; nevertheless the rules which it lays down to distinguish them cannot always be either certain or universal, from the moment that we apply them; for there is commonly found, with respect to ourselves, certain circumstances which alter their nature. I am not speaking here of plain and evident transgressions, of precepts clearly defined in the law, and which leave no doubt respecting the enormity of the offence; I speak of a thousand doubtful and daily transgressions—hatred, jealousy, slander, sensuality, self-seeking, vanity, vivacity, slothfulness, duplicity, negligence in the practice of duties, desires to realize a fortune, or to please men, in which it is difficult to decide exactly to what degree the precept is violated. Now, I say, it is by the disposition of the heart alone, that we can decide respecting the measure and the malignity of these kinds of faults—that the rules are, in that respect, always uncertain—and that frequently that which is a mere fault or surprise in the righteous, is vice and depravity, not only in sinners, but also in lukewarm and unfaithful souls. Do you wish for examples drawn from the sacred books?—Saul, notwithstanding the command of the Lord, spared the king of Amalek, and the most precious things among the spoils of that infidel prince: the fault does not appear to be great; but as it proceeded from a fund of pride, from coldness in the ways of God, and from a vain complacency in his

victory, it was the first step towards his reprobation, for the Spirit of God withdrew from him. Joshua, on the contrary, through too great credulity, spared the Gibeonites, whom the Lord had ordered him to exterminate: he did not consult him before the ark previous to his entering into an alliance with those impostors; but as that infidelity was an act of too great precipitation, or of surprise rather than of disobedience, and as it proceeded from a heart still submissive, religious, and faithful, it was only a light evil in the eyes of God, and pardon speedily followed the fault. Now if this precept is incontestable, upon what do you rely when you regard your daily and habitual infidelities as light? Do you know all the corruption of your heart from which they proceed? God knows it, who searches and judgeth the heart: and he seeth not as man seeth. But if it is allowed to judge any thing before the time, tell us, whether this fund of indolence and of unfaithful negligence which is in you, of voluntary perseverance in a state displeasing to God, of deliberate contempt of all the duties which you do not think essential, of care not to do any thing for God except when he opens hell beneath your feet; tell us whether these can form, in his eyes, a condition very becoming a Christian, and whether the faults which proceed from a principle of depravity, can be light and worthy of indulgence?

Besides, my brethren, Paul, that miraculous man to whom the secrets of heaven had been revealed—Paul, who no longer lived but as Christ lived in him—Paul, who daily desired the dissolution of the earthly tabernacle that he might be clothed with immortality—that Apostle, who was always ready to give up his life for his Master, and to be offered upon the sacrifice of his faith—that chosen vessel, whose conscience reproached him with nothing, yet knew not whether he was deserving of love or of hatred; whether he still bore within his heart the invisible treasure of love, or whether he had lost it; and in these sad perplexities the testimony of his conscience could not allay his

doubts and fears. David, the penitent king, whose delight was in the contemplation of the law of the Lord, and whom the Holy Spirit calls a king after God's own heart,—David nevertheless trembles lest he should not be sufficiently acquainted with the malignity of his faults—lest the depravity of his heart should conceal from him the extent of their enormity: he supposed that unknown abysses might yet remain in his conscience; and this led him to shed torrents of tears before the holy Lord God, and to entreat him to assist him to cleanse himself from his secret faults by making him acquainted with them: *Et ab occultis meis munda me.* (Ps. xviii. 15.) While *you* who never watch your own hearts—*you*, who in lukewarm and sensual manners daily, of deliberate design, allow yourselves in a thousand unfaithful negligences respecting the malignity of which you are ignorant of the judgment of God—*you*, who daily experience those doubtful emotions of the passions, in which, notwithstanding all your self-indulgence, you find so much difficulty to decide whether your consent did not succeed the indulgence; and whether you stopped at that dangerous point which separates a vicious act from a mere fault—*you*, whose almost every action is doubtful, who are continually asking yourselves whether you have not gone too far, who constantly bear trouble and regret in your consciences without ever thoroughly examining the cause—*you*, who eternally float between evident vice and mere faults, and who, at the most, can only say that there is but one step between you and death: *Uno tantùm gradu, ego morsque dividimur:* *you*, in the midst of so many just subjects of alarm would persuade yourselves that you are perfectly acquainted with the state of your consciences—that the decisions which self-love passes upon your faults are the decisions of God himself and that the Lord whom you serve with so much lukewarmness and negligence, does not give you up to your own errors, and does not punish your wanderings by leaving you to mistake your state: you would persuade yourselves that you still retain your

integrity and the grace of sanctification; and you would quiet yourselves respecting your visible and habitual negligences, by a pretended invisible righteous habit, of which you outwardly give no evidence?

O man! how little dost thou know the deceitfulness of the human heart, and the terrible judgments of God upon souls which resemble thee! Thou sayest, "I am rich, I am increased with goods:" this is that for which the Lord formerly reprov'd a lukewarm and unfaithful soul: "and thou seest not," added he, for the character of lukewarmness is blindness and presumption: "thou seest not that thou art poor, miserable, blind, and naked in my eyes." (Rev. iii. 17.) It is therefore the destiny of a lukewarm and unfaithful soul to live in a state of delusion—to believe itself righteous and pleasing to God, and to be fallen, without being aware of it, from grace and from righteousness in his sight.

And I here beg you to reflect, that the self-confidence of which I speak is the more ill founded, as no one is less capable of judging the heart than the lukewarm and unfaithful soul. For the open sinner cannot conceal his crimes from himself, and he sensibly feels that he is dead in the sight of God; and the righteous man, although he is ignorant whether he is deserving of love or of hatred, possesses at least a conscience which does not reproach him; but the lukewarm and unfaithful soul is always an inexplicable mystery to itself: for lukewarmness dims the light of faith, strengthens the passions, and increases our darkness; every act of infidelity spreads a new cloud over the understanding and the heart, which obscures the doctrines of salvation. Hence thine heart is by little and little enveloped in darkness, thy conscience is embarrassed, thy light is diminished, thou art no longer that spiritual man which judgeth all things: thou, by insensible degrees, createst secret maxims within thyself, which diminish thy faults in thine own eyes; thy blindness increases in proportion to thy lukewarmness: the more negligent thou

becomest, the more thou beholdest duties and rules with an indifferent eye: that which formerly appeared important, now appears a foolish scruple: those omissions which, in the time of thy fervour occasioned thee the most poignant remorse, thou no longer regardest even as faults: the principles, the judgment, the understanding, all are changed.

Now, in this situation, who has told thee that thou art not mistaken in the judgment which thou formest respecting the nature of thy unfaithful negligences and daily falls? Who has told thee, that what appears to thee so light, is so in reality, and that the distant bounds which thou fixest to crime, and within which all appears to thee to be venial, are in effect the precise bounds of the law? Alas! even the most enlightened guides are unable to penetrate a lukewarm and unfaithful conscience: these are those languishing diseases, so to speak, of whose nature we are wholly ignorant—concerning which the most skilful masters of the art are unable to decide, and whose cause always remains an enigma: in this state of coldness thou sensibly feelest that thou carriest in thy heart an indefinable kind of embarrassment which is never cleared up to thy satisfaction—that there always remains lurking in thy conscience something inexplicable and secret, which thou never more than a half disclorest: it is not thy deeds, but the real state and character of thy soul which thou never makest known: thou sensibly feelest that the faults which thou confessest never fully accord with thy most secret dispositions, nor describe thy inmost soul as it really is, there is always something more culpable in thy heart than the negligences with which thou comest to accuse thyself.

Indeed, who can assure thee that in thy secret and continual examination of thyself; that in that effeminacy of manners which constitutes as it were the whole tenor of thy life; that in that solicitude to manage every thing so as to flatter the senses—to remove every thing which incommodes thee—always to sacrifice every thing which does not appear essential to thy duty, to laziness and indo-

lence ; that thy self-love has not gained the dominion over and banished all love from thy heart ? Who could guarantee thee, that in those voluntary and frequent acts of infidelity, in which, confirmed by their lightness, thou resistest the grace which would secretly turn thee from them ; thou stiflest the voice of conscience which reproaches thee ; thou always actest against thy convictions ; that this inward contempt of the voice of God, that this daily and formal abuse of light and grace, is not an insult offered to the Divine goodness, a criminal contempt of His gifts, a malignity of error, which leaves thee no excuse ; a deliberate preference of thy propensities and of thyself to Jesus Christ, who only forsakes the heart in which the love of order and of righteousness is extinguished ? Who could inform thee, whether in these thoughts, in which thy idle spirit a thousand times recalled objects and events dangerous to modesty, thy backwardness to combat them was not criminal ; and whether the efforts which thou afterwards madest to subdue them were not an artifice of self-love, which, when it was too late, wished to disguise thy crimes to thyself, and to quiet thee respecting the indulgence which thou hadst already granted them ? Finally, who would dare to decide, whether in those antipathies and secret animosities concerning which thou never puttest thyself to much inconvenience, and always more out of regard to decorum than to piety, thou always stoppest at that precise and slippery step beyond which enmity and the death of the soul is always found ? whether that extravagant sensibility which commonly accompanies thy afflictions, thy infirmities, thy losses, thy disgraces, which thou callest the inevitable sentiments of nature, are not the fruits of a disordered heart, and a spirit of rebellion against the orders of Providence ? whether in all that lively solicitude which thou constantly manifestest either to promote thy fortune, or to preserve a vain beauty, there does not enter sufficient vivacity to constitute the crime of ambition, or sufficient self-complacency and desire to

please others to defile thy soul with the crime of voluptuousness? Great God! who hast clearly discerned, as thy servant Job formerly said, those fatal bounds which separate in the heart, life from death, and light from darkness? These are the abysses, on account of which the individual but little instructed cannot but tremble, and the exposure of which Thou reservest till the terrible day of Thy vengeance. This is the second reason drawn from the uncertainty of the rules which leaves the state of a lukewarm soul very doubtful, and which deprives it of the capability of knowing itself.

But a last reason which to me appears still more decisive and terrible to the lukewarm soul is this, that nothing is any longer seen to belong to it which can lead us to presume that it still preserves the grace of sanctification, and that every thing leads to the conclusion that it has lost it; that is to say, that among all the characteristics of an habitual and active love there is no longer apparent in it a single one.

For, my brethren, the first characteristic of love is to fill us with that spirit of adoption which leads us to love God as our Father—to love His law and the righteousness of His commandments, and to dread the loss of His love, more than every calamity with which he threatens us.

Now, that solicitude alone which leads a lukewarm soul to examine whether an offence is venial, or whether it goes still farther even to deny to God all that it can deny Him without guilt—to study the law only to learn to what length it is permitted to violate it—to espouse incessantly the interests of cupidity, in opposition to those of grace; and internally to justify every thing that flatters the passions, in opposition to the strictness of the rules which forbid them; now, that solicitude, I say, can proceed only from a heart desitute of faith and love—from a heart in which the Spirit of God, that Spirit of love and of charity, appears not to reign; for only prodigal sons would thus chicanery with the father of the family, would wish to insist

upon their rights to the utmost extent, and to take all that they can claim.

And to give this reflection all its force, that disposition which leads us deliberately to allow ourselves in every kind of infidelity which we do not think deserving of eternal punishment, is the disposition of a slave and a mercenary : that is to say, if we could promise ourselves the same impunity, and the same indulgence from God, for the transgressions of the most important points of the law of God, we should violate them with the same facility that we violate the least : in other words, if an act of open revenge, if a dark calumny or a criminal attachment, were liable to no other consequence in futurity than a slight expression of resentment, than a malicious and scandalous speech, than a desire to please, and than too great care and attention to ourselves we should not have a greater horror of the one than of the other. That is to say, when we are obedient to the Divine commandment, it is not because we love righteousness, but because we fear punishment ; we do not submit to order or to the law, but to His chastisements : it is not the Lord that we propose to please but ourselves ; for where His glory alone is concerned and no injury will be incurred owing to the lightness of our unfaithful negligences, we do not fear to displease Him : we even secretly justify all such transgressions by saying to ourselves, that although they offend and displease the Lord, they do not occasion the ruin of the soul or damn any one. That which regards Him does not affect us ; His glory is reckoned for nothing in the distinction which we make between allowed or forbidden acts ; it is our interest alone which regulates our fidelity upon the subject, and nothing awakens us from our lukewarmness but eternal flames : we are even delighted with the impunity attached to these little faults—that we can satisfy our inclinations without being liable to any other misfortune than that of displeasing God ; we love this unhappy liberty, which appears to leave us the right to be unfaithful with-

out being liable to punishment. We are its apologists: we even carry this liberty farther than it really goes: we wish that games, spectacles, pleasures, decorations, sensualities, witticisms, animosities, and idle pursuits were all venial. What shall I say? we could wish this liberty to be extended to every thing—that nothing which pleases us should be liable to punishment—that the Lord were neither a just God nor the avenger of iniquity, and that we might give up ourselves to all our propensities, and violate the sanctity of His law, without fearing the severity of His justice. However little the lukewarm person enters into himself, he will perceive that this is the real state of his heart, and his habitual disposition.

Now, I ask you, is this the situation of one who still retains the grace and love of a sanctified state; that is to say, that still loves his God more than the world, than every creature, than every pleasure, than every advantage of fortune, than himself?—of one who derives joy only from possessing Him—who only fears to lose Him—who knows no misfortune but that of having displeased Him? Does the love that you think you still preserve, in this manner, seek its own interest? Does it reckon as nothing the displeasure of him whom it loves, provided its infidelity should go unpunished? Does it set itself to calculate, as you daily do, to what degree it can offend Him with impunity, to take its measures accordingly, and to allow itself every transgression to which the hope of impunity is attached? Does it see nothing lovely in its God, nothing suited to engage the heart of man to Him but His chastisements? If He were not a terrible and avenging God, would it be less affected with His infinite mercy, with His eternal beauty, with His truth, His holiness, and His justice?

Ah, lukewarm and faithless soul! thou *no longer lovest Him*, thou no longer livest for Him;—thou no longer lovest, thou no longer livest but for thyself: that remains of fidelity which still keeps thee from the commission of

crimes, is only a fund of laziness, of timidity, and of self-love; thou wishest to live in peace with thyself; thou fearest the trouble of sinful passions, and the remorse of a defiled conscience. The commission of crimes is attended with fatigue, and this is the only thing which displeases thee: thou lovest repose; this constitutes all thy religion: indolence is the only barrier which arrests thee, and all thy virtue is confined to thyself. And, in sooth, thou wishest to know whether this infidelity is a venial offence, or whether it goes farther: thou knowest that it displeases God; for that is not a doubtful point; but that does not suffice to prohibit it. Thou wishest, moreover, to know whether it is a crime deserving of hell? Ah! thou plainly perceivest that this inquiry only refers to thyself; that thou designest to reckon sin for nothing, so far as it is an offence against God, and displeasing to Him. An important motive, however, which ought to render it hateful to thee, is, that thou dost not serve the Lord with sincerity and love; that thy pretended virtue is only a natural timidity, which does not dare to expose itself to the terrible threatenings of the law; that thou art only a vile slave, to whom the rod must be shewn to keep thee under restraint; that thou resemblest that unfaithful servant who had hidden his talent because he knew that his master was severe; and who, but for that, had wasted it in foolish expenses; and that in the preparation of the heart, which God alone regards, thou hatest his holy law; thou lovest all that He forbids; thou art no longer under the influence of love; thou art a child of darkness and of perdition.

The second characteristic of love, saith St. Bernard, is to be timorous, and to magnify our faults in our own eyes: it increases and aggravates every thing, saith that Father: *sed aggravat sed exaggerat universa*. Love does not deceive us, and hide the truth from us; but, disengaging our souls from the influence of the senses, it clears the eye of faith, and renders it more discerning respecting spiritual things: and besides, every thing that displeases

the sole object of our love, appears serious and considerable to a soul under the influence of love. Hence love is always humble, timid, and suspicious; is incessantly agitated with those pious perplexities which leave it in doubt respecting its state,—always alarmed by those delicate and gracious feelings which cause it to tremble respecting every action, which makes the uncertainty in which they leave it a kind of martyrdom to love which promotes its purification. These are not those vain and childish scruples which we blame in weak minds; they are the pious fears of grace and love which belong to every faithful soul, that works out its salvation with fear and trembling; and which frequently regards those actions as crimes which before God are often, indeed almost always, mere weaknesses: these are those holy perplexities of love which derive their source even from the light of faith: this way has been the way of the righteous in all ages.

And yet it is this pretended love that you think you preserve in the midst of your lukewarm life and of your numerous infidelities, and which makes them appear light to you: it is that very love that you think you still retain, which confirms you, which leads you to think less of your faults, which establishes you in a state of peace and safety; in a word, which not only banishes from your heart all those pious alarms always inseparable from piety, but which causes you to regard them as weaknesses, and as the excesses of piety itself. Now, tell me, I pray you, whether this is not a contradiction—whether love thus belies itself, and whether you can place much dependence upon a love which so nearly resembles hatred.

Finally, the last characteristic of love is, to be lively and active. Read all that the Apostle writes respecting its activity and fruitfulness in a Christian heart: it is active wherever it is; it cannot be idle, said the saints: it is a heavenly fire, which nothing can restrain from acting: it may indeed be at times concealed and checked by the multitude of our weaknesses; but so long as it is not wholly

extinguished it always sends forth certain sparks—such as vows, sighs, groans, efforts and works : the sacraments and the holy mysteries re-animate it ; prayer awakens it ; pious writings, the ministry of the word, the spectacles of religion, holy inspirations, yea afflictions, reproaches, and bodily infirmities, all rekindle this hallowed fire, when it is not wholly extinct. It is written in the Second Book of Maccabees, that the sacred fire which the Jews had hidden during the captivity was found on their return covered with a thick moss : it appeared extinguished to the children of the priests, who discovered it under the guidance of Nehemiah ; but as the surface only of this sacred fire was covered, while it inwardly preserved all its virtue, they no sooner exposed it to the rays of the sun, than it rekindled and presented to their view a glory altogether new, accompanied with surprising activity. 2 Macc. ii. 22.

This is the emblem of lukewarmness in a truly righteous soul, and that which ought to occur if the multitude of your infidelities had only covered and checked, but had not extinguished, the sacred fire of love : this, I say, ought to take place when you come to hear the sacred word and approach the sacraments. When therefore Jesus Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, glances on you some beams of his grace and light, and inspires you with holy desires, we ought to see your hearts again lighted up and your fervour renewed ; you ought to appear all on fire in the practice of your obligations, and to surprise the most intimate witnesses of your life, by the renovation of your manners, and the revival of your zeal. *Accensus est ignis magnus, ita ut omnes mirarentur.*

And yet nothing arouses you : the sacraments which you frequent leave you lukewarm ; the words of the Gospel which you hear fall upon your heart as seed upon dry ground, where it withers in an instant ; the views of salvation which grace produces within you, are never followed by the renovation of your manners ; you every where carry about with you the same indolence and the

same languor; you leave the foot of the altar as cold and insensible as you approach it. We perceive not in you those revivals of zeal and fervour so familiar to righteous souls, and to which they derive incentives even from their falls: that which you were yesterday, you continue to-day; the same infidelities and the same weaknesses exist: you do not advance a single step in the way of salvation: not all the fire of heaven could rekindle this pretended love upon which you rely as hidden in the inmost recesses of your heart. Ah! my dear hearer, how much I fear lest it should be extinguished, and lest you should be dead in the eyes of God. I will not here anticipate the secret judgment which the Lord passes upon your conscience; but I tell you that your state is by no means safe; I even tell you, that if we judge according to the rules of revelation, you are in a state of disgrace and of enmity against God. I tell you beside, that so long, so constant, so durable a lukewarmness cannot subsist together with a principle of supernatural life, which always discovers from time to time at least some emotions or signs of life; it arises, it is animated, and takes wing as if to disengage itself from the bonds which weigh it down; and I repeat it, that a love so silent, so inert, and so constantly torpid, is already extinct.

But the great danger of such a state is this, that a lukewarm soul entertains no suspicion upon the subject. It sensibly feels that it could carry fervour and fidelity to a higher point; but it regards this zeal and this exactness as a state of perfection, and of grace reserved to certain persons, and not as a duty incumbent upon every one: hence it rests satisfied in that state of lukewarmness into which it is fallen; it has made no advance in virtue since the first ardours which were excited by a remarkable conversion: all the zeal with which it then combated criminal passions, being extinct, it thinks it has only quietly to enjoy the fruits of its victory: it never thinks to repair a thousand sad effects which still remain from its first shipwreck; in-

stead of suppressing, it loves a thousand weaknesses, a thousand corrupt inclinations which remain from its first disorders : the sacraments no longer revive its faith, they amuse it ; conversion is no longer an end kept in view, it believes it effected : its confessions are mere repetitions and portraitures which resemble each other : to confess is no longer to propose a change ; for what can be found to need a change in a course of life in which every thing appears in its place, and in which no gross faults strike the senses ? It is simply to acquit itself of a pious duty, and to amuse the minister of Christ with the recital of certain slight faults of which it does not repent, while the whole character is a tissue of crime of which it is ignorant. Besides, our ministry is still made effectual at times to the salvation of great sinners ; and we daily behold, with consolation, persons, deeply affected after a life of irregularity and crime, come and cast themselves at our feet, where they surprise us with the greatness of their grief, the excess of their tears, and the strength of their faith ; they melt our hearts by the abundance of their sighs, and the greatness of their compunction ; and they leave our presence justified ; while those lukewarm and unfaithful souls of whom I speak, constantly reconciled by us, but never penitent, continually bring to the tribunal the same weaknesses which are never pardoned, because they are never detested as they ought to be ; and they prove that it is easier to pass from a state of sin to a state of virtue, than from lukewarmness to penitence.

Alas ! the sacred guide of your conscience, to whom you constantly resort, to repeat only trifling foibles, and who cannot see the depravity of heart from which they proceed, is, perhaps, through the awful judgment of God upon you, like yourself easy respecting your state : he supposes that you only sleep, that you are *cold* : he satisfies himself by rousing you from your negligence, by awakening you from your lukewarmness ; he judges of

you as the disciples formerly did of Lazarus ; “ If he sleep he shall do well ” (John x. 12) : that this sleep, this indolence in the ways of God, this lukewarmness will not lead you to death. But Jesus Christ, who sees you as you are, and who judges not like man, Jesus Christ declares that you have been long since dead in His eyes : “ Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead.” He spoke it openly ; that is to say, it was not a new occurrence, for Lazarus whom they only thought languishing had been already three days dead : that is to say, that when a grown and open fall at length terminates the lukewarmness of an unfaithful soul, the death which had long seized the heart, is manifested. It is a new thing only to men, who see not what passes within ; but before God, it was dead, like Lazarus, almost from the day that it languished : “ Then Jesus said to them plainly, Lazarus is dead.”

He deceives himself because his conscience reproaches him with nothing criminal ; and he does not perceive that it is that very tranquillity which constitutes all his danger, and, perhaps, also all his guilt. He believes himself safe respecting his state, because it presents more innocence and regularity than that of dissolute souls, and he will not understand that a life wholly according to the course of nature cannot be a life of grace and of faith ; and that a lazy and unmortified state is a state of sin and of death.

Therefore, my dear hearer, to whom this discourse relates, be renewed continually in the spirit of your vocation ; arise daily, according to the advice of the Apostle, by prayer, by the mortification of the senses, by watchfulness over your passions, by an inward life, by a continual revival in your hearts of that first grace which drew you from the errors of the world, and led you into the ways of God. Reckon that piety hath nothing certain and consoling but fidelity ; that by becoming lukewarm, you increase your troubles, because you multiply your bonds ; that in depriving your duties of zeal, fervour and exactness, you deprive

them of all their sweetness ; that in ceasing to be faithful, you cease to be secure ; and that in confining yourself to the avoidance of vice, you lose the reward of virtue.

And now, since you have already sacrificed that which is essential, why should you still adhere to frivolous attachments ? will you, after having taken the most painful and the most heroic steps in the way of salvation, perish through your unwillingness to take the least ? When Naaman, little affected with gratitude that the prophet had directed him only to wash in the waters of Jordan to heal him of his leprosy, turned away from the man of God in contempt, as though his cure could not be effected by so easy a remedy, his suite corrected his error by saying to him, " My lord, if the man of God had ordered you some difficult thing, you ought to have obeyed him : " you have forsaken your country, your gods, and your children, to come to consult the prophet ; you have exposed yourself to the danger of a long journey, you have borne all its inconveniences, to recover your health, and, after so many painful steps, will you refuse to try so easy an expedient as that which the man of God has proposed to you ? " If the prophet had bid you do some great thing, you certainly ought to have done it ; how much more when he said to thee, Wash and be clean ? "

And this is what I would address to you, in the conclusion of this discourse : you have forsaken the world, and the idols which you formerly worshipped therein ; you have come from so great distance to the ways of God ; you have had so many passions to vanquish, so many obstacles to surmount, so many things to sacrifice, so many difficult steps to take ; you have endured the trials, the contempt, and the senseless ridicule inseparable from an extraordinary conversion : there remains but one step for you to take ; you are only required to set a strict watch over yourself. If the sacrifice of criminal passions had not already been made, and it were required from you, you would not hesitate for a moment ; you would make the sacrifice whatever it

might cost you : if the prophet had bid you do some great thing, certainly you would have done it : and *now* when mere purifications are required of you—*now* when nearly the same things are required from you as you already perform, but to be practised with more fervour, with more fidelity, with more faith, and with more vigilance, are you excusable in dispensing with their practice ? “ How much more when he now saith to thee, Wash and be clean ? ” Why should you render fruitless all your first exertions, by refusing so easy a thing ? why should you have renounced the world and criminal pleasures, to find in the ways of piety the same rock which you thought to shun by flying from the commission of crimes ; and must you not be an object of commiseration, if, after having sacrificed to God the principal things, you should ruin yourself because you will still deny him a thousand sacrifices less painful to the heart and to nature ? How much more when he now saith to thee, Wash and be clean.

Perfect then in us, O my God ! that which thy grace has begun : triumph over our languor and our weakness, since thou hast already triumphed over our crimes. Give us fervent and faithful hearts, since thou hast already taken away our criminal and depraved hearts : inspire us with those good dispositions which constitute the character of the righteous, since thou hast extinguished in us those irregular dispositions which constitute great sinners. Leave not thy work imperfect ; and since thou hast introduced us into the holy path of salvation, make us worthy of the crown which thou hast promised to those who strive lawfully. Amen.



SERMON VII.

ON A STATE OF LUKEWARMNESS.

LUKE iv. 38.

Jesus, having left the synagogue, entered into the house of Simon, whose wife's mother had a great fever.

SINCE Simon judged the presence of Christ necessary for the recovery of his wife's mother, doubtless, my brethren, the malady was violent and threatened a sudden dissolution: the ordinary methods must have become useless, so that nothing short of a miracle could effect her cure and snatch her from the jaws of death: yet the Evangelist only says she was seized with a fever. In every other instance Jesus was applied to, only to raise the dead, to cure paralytics, to grant sight and hearing to those born blind and deaf; and, in a word, to heal diseases curable only by the Sovereign of life and death: here He is called merely to restore health to one afflicted with a fever. Why is the Almighty applied to for so slight an infirmity? It is because a fever*, being the natural image of lukewarmness in the ways of God, the Holy Spirit desired by that means to teach us that that malady, apparently light, and from which no danger is apprehended—that lukewarmness so common in religion—is a malady which infallibly destroys the soul, and that a miracle is necessary to prevent its leading to death.

Yes, my brethren, of all the maxims of Christian morals, there is no one concerning which experience leaves us less

* See Appendix, Note I.

uncertainty, than respecting that which assures us that the making light of the least obligation, insensibly leads to the transgression of the most considerable ; and that negligence in the ways of God, is never far removed from a fall. He who despises little things will fall by little and little, saith the Holy Spirit ; he that despiseth them, that is to say, he who deliberately violates them and introduces them into his plan and practice : for if you only fall at times through weakness or surprise, which is the common lot of the righteous, this discourse will no further relate to you ; but to despise them in the way already explained and which applies only to lukewarm and unfaithful souls, is a way that always ends in the loss of righteousness : First, because the special grace necessary to perseverance in virtue is no longer given ; Secondly, because the passions which lead to vice are thereby fortified ; Thirdly, and in the last place, because all the aids of piety become useless. Let us unfold these three reflexions : they include important instructions respecting the various particulars of the Christian life ; which may be useful not only to those who make a public and open profession of piety, but also to those who make all virtue to consist in good conduct, and in a certain regularity which the world itself requires.—Let us pray.

Part I.—It is a doctrine of salvation, saith St. Augustin, that even the most innocent and holy persons require the continual aid of Divine grace. Man given up to sin through the depravity of his nature, finds scarcely any thing within him but erroneous principles and the sources of corruption: justice and truth originally born with us are become strange to us: all our propensities, being opposed to the law of God, bear us away, as in spite of ourselves, towards illicit objects ; so that to return to order, and to submit our hearts to the law, we must incessantly resist the impressions of sense, oppose our strongest natural inclinations, and fortify ourselves without intermission against ourselves. There is

no duty which is not difficult to us, no precept written in the law which does not oppose some one of our propensities; no step in the way of God to which our hearts are not wholly opposed.

To this load of corruption, which renders duty so difficult and iniquity so natural, add the snares which surround us, the examples which seduce us, the objects which soften us, the temptations which surprise us, the compliances which weaken us, the afflictions which discourage us, the property which corrupts us, the circumstances which blind us, the rules of decorum which incommode us, the contradictions which try us, and every thing about us which becomes a continual temptation.

I do not even speak of the miseries peculiar to ourselves, or the particular opposition to order and justice which our past manners and first passions have left in our hearts—that relish of the world and its pleasures—that aversion to virtue and its maxims—that dominion of the senses, strengthened by a voluptuous life—that invincible indolence to which every thing seems difficult, and to which every thing difficult becomes almost impossible—that pride which will neither bend nor submit—that inconsistency of heart which is incapable of continuance or of uniformity, which is soon wearied with itself, which cannot submit to the rule, because the rule is always the same; which wills and which wills not; which passes in the twinkling of an eye from excessive dejection to a vain and childish joy, and which forms the most sincere resolution one moment, and unfaithfully violates it the next.

Now, in such miserable circumstances, ah! what, O my God! can the most righteous man do?—abandoned to his natural weakness, to all the snares which surround him, bearing in his heart the source of every irregularity, and in his mind the principles of every illusion? Only the grace of Jesus Christ can deliver him from so much misery, enlighten him in the midst of so much darkness, support him in opposition to so many difficulties, uphold him on

such a steep declivity, and fortify him against so many attacks : if he is left but for a moment to himself, he either falls or wanders ; if an Almighty hand ceases for a moment to preserve him, the stream carries him away : our constancy in virtue is a continual miracle ; our progress in the way of God, is all derived from fresh communications of the Holy Spirit,—that is to say, of that invisible Guide who urges and conducts us onwards : our acts of piety are all the gifts of Divine mercy, since every good use of our liberty comes from him, and since He crowns his gifts by recompensing our deserts ; every moment of our Christian life is therefore as a new creation in faith and piety ; that is to say—for this spiritual creation does not suppose a vacuum in a righteous man, but a principle of grace and of liberty which co-operates with it—that is to say, that, as in the course of nature, we should fall into non-existence if the Creator should cease to preserve the being which he has given us ; so in the Divine life we should again fall into sin and death, if the Restorer should for a moment cease to maintain, by new succours, the gift of righteousness and sanctity with which he has adorned our souls : such is the weakness of man and his continual dependence upon the grace of Jesus Christ. The fidelity of the righteous man is therefore both the fruit of the continual succours of Divine grace and its principle : it is grace alone which can produce the fidelity of a righteous man ; and it is the fidelity of the righteous man alone which merits the preservation and the increase of grace in the heart.

For, my brethren, as the dealings of God with us abound in wisdom and equity, it is proper that there should be a degree of order in the distribution of his graces and gifts—that the Lord should communicate himself more fully to the person who most carefully prepares his heart for His reception—that He should give more constant marks of his protection and mercy to a righteous man who gives him continual marks of his love and fidelity ; and that the servant who improves his talents

should be recompensed in proportion to the improvement which he has made: on the other hand, it is just that a slothful and unfaithful person, who serves his God with reluctance and negligence should find him opposed and cold to him; and as he presents nothing to his eyes but what is suited to offend him, it is not surprising that He, according to the expression of the Holy Spirit, spues him out of his mouth, with the same abhorrence and the same indignation that we reject a lukewarm and loathsome draught. The penalty inseparable from lukewarmness, is therefore the privation of the grace of protection. If you become cold, God will, in his turn, become so to you: if you confine the expression of your respect to him, to the performance of those important duties which you cannot deny him without guilt, He will limit his regard to the granting you only those general aids with which you will not be able to proceed far: He withdraws from you, in proportion as you withdraw from him; and your fidelity in his service, is the measure of that which he himself will bring to your protection.

Nothing is more just than such a procedure: for you enter into judgment with your God. You neglect all the opportunities by which you might give him proofs of your fidelity, and He suffers all those to pass by in which He might give you those of his good will: you deny him every thing that you think you do not owe him; you are careful not to give him any thing beyond; you seem to say to him as He said to the unjust servant: "Take that thine is, and ask for nothing more: did we not agree upon the price?" (Matt. xx. 13, 14.) You reckon, so to speak, with your God: your whole concern is to prescribe bounds to his claims upon your heart; and all his concern is, in his turn, to set bounds to his mercy towards you, and to deny you, if it be allowed to adopt such language, all that He can be dispensed from granting you: He pays your indifference by his own. Only love will secure the return of love; and if you do not sufficiently feel all the terror

and force of this truth, allow me to unfold its sad consequences to you.

The first is, this, That this state of lukewarmness and infidelity, by removing the grace of protection from the lukewarm soul, leaves it only common aids—leaves it, so to speak, destitute of God, and abandoned to its own weakness. It may, no doubt, with those common succours which are left to it, maintain the fidelity which it *owes* to God; for it always possesses sufficient to be capable of sustaining itself in well-doing: but its lukewarmness does not permit it to make use of them: that is to say, it is still assisted with those succours with which it *may* persevere; but it is not with those through which it infallibly *does* persevere: so that there is no temptation which does not make some dangerous impression on such a soul and which does not bring it near to a fall. I allow that a happy natural disposition—that a remains of modesty and of the fear of God—that a conscience still terrified at sin—that a concern to preserve a reputation for virtue, may defend it for a time against itself: nevertheless as these resources, derived mostly from nature, cannot hold out long—as the objects of sense in the midst of which it lives make every day new wounds in the heart, and as those less abundant succours of grace no longer repair those daily losses,—its strength, alas! decreases from day to day, its faith is weakened, and the truth becomes less evident: the more it advances, the worse it becomes; it sensibly feels that it no longer leaves the world and situations of danger so innocently as it formerly left them—that it carries its weaknesses and compliances farther—that it passes certain bounds which it had till then respected—that free discourse finds it more indulgent, slander more favourable, temptations more yielding, pleasures less scrupulous, and the world more compliant—that it returns from it with a heart half vanquished, and that is only feebly sustained by a regard to propriety; it feels its losses, but it no longer feels any thing to repair them; in short, that God has almost

withdrawn from it, and that no barrier but its own weakness remains between it and the commission of sin. This is where you *now* are; judge where you will be in a little time.

I know that this state of relaxation and infidelity troubles and disquiets you—that you daily say that no state is so happy as to be no longer attached to any thing, and that you envy the destiny of those souls which unreservedly give up themselves to God and which wholly renounce the world. But you deceive yourselves: it is not the faith and the fervour of those faithful souls that you envy: what you envy in their lot is only the joy and the repose which they enjoy in the service of God, and which you yourselves do not enjoy: you envy only the insensibility and happy indifference which they have attained towards the world, and towards all that the world esteems, and the love of which occasions all your troubles, your remorse, and your secret pains; but you do not envy the sacrifices which they were obliged to make to arrive at that state; you do not envy the struggles which they had to endure to establish themselves in that happy enjoyment of peace and tranquillity—you do not envy what it cost them to merit the gift of a lively and active faith: you envy the felicity of their state; but you would not wish to sacrifice, for its possession, the illusions and softness of your own.

Besides, the second consequence which I deduce from the grace of protection denied to the lukewarm soul, is this, that the yoke of Christ becomes to it a cruel, overwhelming, and insupportable yoke. For, my brethren, through the depravity of our nature, having lost the love of righteousness and truth, which constituted the dearest delight of man in innocence, we have no longer any vivacity or inclination except for the objects of sense and passion. The duties of the law, which incessantly recal us from the flesh to the Spirit, and which oblige us to sacrifice present pleasures to the hopes of future promises; these duties, I say, soon become wearisome to our weakness, because they are efforts

made in opposition to ourselves : a gracious unction is therefore necessary to ease this yoke, to diffuse secret consolation over its bitterness, and to convert the sorrow attached to duty into a holy and sensible joy.

Now, the lukewarm soul, deprived of this unction, feels only the weight of the yoke, but not the consolations which sweeten it. The cup of Jesus only yields its bitterness to the taste : hence, all the duties of piety become insipid to you : the duties connected with salvation wearisome ; your consciences, burdened and disquieted with the coldness and infidelity which you cannot justify, no longer permit you to enjoy peace and joy in the service of God : you feel all the weight of those duties which a remains of faith and of the love of repose will not allow you to omit ; but you do not feel the secret approbation of conscience which comforts and sustains the fervent soul : you shun certain parties of pleasure, which often become fatal to innocence ; and in your retreat from them you only find a deadly *ennui* and a more lively and eager desire to enjoy the same pleasures which you deny yourselves : you pray, but prayer becomes a mere wandering of the mind, and a fatigue : you employ yourselves in works of mercy ; and, if pride or inclination do not sustain you, every thing that they possess of a self-denying nature becomes insupportable : you visit virtuous persons, but their society is so wearisome to you, that it gives you a dislike to virtue itself : the least violence which you endure for heaven costs you so great an effort that the pleasures and amusements of the world become necessary to relieve you from your transient fatigue : the least act of mortification weakens your body and disturbs your temper ; and you can only be comforted by an immediate resolution to desist from its practice : you live unhappy and destitute of consolation, because you deprive yourselves of a world which you love, and substitute duties in its place in which you have no delight. Your whole life is only a sad state of weariness and perpetual disgust of yourselves : you resemble the Israelites in the

wilderness, who were disgusted with the manna with which the Lord supplied them ; and yet did not dare to return to the viands of Egypt which they still loved, and which they denied themselves only through the fear of being smitten of God.

Now, this state of violence cannot last long : we are soon weary with that remains of virtue which does not compose the heart, which does not satisfy our reason, and which does not even gratify our self-love ; we soon shake off a yoke which oppresses us, and which we bear, not from love, but out of a regard to decorum. It is so cheerless to be nothing, so to speak ; to be neither righteous nor worldly ; to belong neither to the world nor to Jesus Christ ; to enjoy neither the pleasures of sense, nor the pleasures of grace ; that it is impossible to continue for any time in this wearisome situation of indifference and of neutrality. The heart, especially a heart of a certain description, requires an ostensible object to engage and interest it ; if it be not God it will soon be the world : a lively, ardent, and extravagant heart, such as most men possess, cannot be fixed except by its feelings ; and to be constantly disgusted with virtue, is at once to offer the heart to the attractions of vice.

I know, in the first place, that there are lazy and indolent souls, which appear to rest in a state of equilibrium and of insensibility—which manifest no eager desire either for the world or for virtue—which seem by their character equally distant from the ardours of sincere piety, and the excesses of a profane course—which preserve in the midst of the pleasures of the world, a degree of moderation and regularity which still announces a sense of virtue, and in the midst of the duties of religion a degree of indecision and coldness which still inhales the air and the maxims of the world : they are quiet and sluggish hearts which are ardent in nothing—in which indolence almost supplies the place of virtue ; and which neither have attained to that pitch of piety which constitutes faithful souls, nor yet proceeded

to that degree of profligacy which constitutes abandoned and criminal souls.

I know it, my brethren ; but I know also that this sluggishness of heart preserves us only from those crimes which are attended with difficulty : it preserves us only from certain pleasures which we must purchase at the expense of our tranquillity, and which only the love of repose can prohibit. It leaves us virtuous only in the eyes of men, who confound the indolence which fears trouble, with the piety which flees from vice ; but it does not defend us from ourselves, from a thousand unlawful desires, a thousand criminal compliances, a thousand more secret and less painful passions, because they are concealed in the heart ;—from the jealousy which consumes us—the animosities which sour us—the ambition which brings us into subjection—the pride which corrupts us—the desire to please men which possesses us—the excessive self-love which is the principle of all our conduct, and which infects all our actions ; that is to say, that this indolence leaves us a prey to all our secret weaknesses, while it serves as a check upon our most violent and tumultuous passions, and that that which appears only indolence in the eyes of men, is always a secret evil, and a disgrace before God.

I know, in the second place, that that delight in piety, or that unction which sweetens the practice of duty, is a gift often denied even to the most holy and faithful. But there are three important distinctions between the faithful soul to which the Lord denies the sensible consolations of piety, and the lukewarm and worldly soul which is oppressed with the weight of its yoke, and which cannot relish the things of God.

The first is this, that the faithful soul, notwithstanding its aversions and its distress, always preserves a steady and solid faith—finds that state and exemption from crime, in which it has lived, since God graciously touched it, a thousand times more happy than that in which it lived, when it was given up to its passions ; and penetrated with a horror of

its past excesses, it would not for all the pleasures of the earth, again exchange its condition and return to its former vices; while the lukewarm and unfaithful soul, disgusted with virtue, regards the pleasures and the vain felicity of the world with envy; and as these disgusts are only the consequence and the penalty of its weak and lukewarm faith, vice begins to appear to it as its sole resource under the weariness and dulness of piety.

The second distinction is this, That the faithful soul, amidst its distress and barrenness, at least possesses a conscience that does not reproach it with any crime; it is sustained by the testimony of its own heart, and by a degree of peace that results from innocence, which, although not lively and sensible, ceases not to communicate a calm which we never experience in error; while the lukewarm and unfaithful soul, allowing itself, in opposition to the dictates of its own heart, a thousand daily transgressions of whose malignity it is ignorant, always bears a disturbed and undecided conscience; and being no longer supported either by the relish of its religious duties, or by the peace and testimony of its conscience, this state of agitation and of weariness soon terminates in the fatal security resulting from a criminal course.

Finally, the last distinction is this, That the troubles of the faithful soul being only the trials which God employs for its purification, He supplies the place of the sensible consolations of virtue, which He withholds, in a thousand different ways—by a more effectual protection, by a compassionate attention to remove all the dangers which might seduce it, and by the more abundant succours of grace: because He designs not to destroy or to discourage it, but to try it, and to cause it to expiate, by the pains and austerities of virtue, the unrighteous pleasures of sin. But the sorrows of the unfaithful soul are not trials, they are punishments: God is not, in its case, a merciful God, suspending the consolations of His grace, without suspending grace itself; but a severe God, who avenges

himself, and withdraws—not a tender Father, who makes up, by his great affection and by effectual succours, the apparent rigours which he is obliged to employ, but a severe Judge who begins to deprive the criminal of a thousand comforts only because He is preparing for him a sentence of death. The difficulties of virtue find a thousand resources in virtue itself—those of lukewarmness can find them only in the deceitful pleasures of vice.

Such, my brethren, is the inevitable destiny of lukewarmness—all the miseries consequent upon a fall. Will you tell us after this, that you wish to practise a sort of virtue which will be lasting; that great zeal is never persevered in; that it is better not to aim too high, and to persevere to the end; and that we do not hold on so long when we put ourselves out of breath at the first step?

I know that all excesses, even in piety, do not originate from the Spirit of God, who is a Spirit of wisdom and prudence; that the zeal which leads us out of our place, and from the duties of our station, is not a piety which descends from above, but an illusion which springs from ourselves; that indiscretion is one source of false virtue; and that we often sacrifice to vanity when we think that we are sacrificing to truth. But I tell you from God, that to persevere in his ways, we must devote ourselves to him without reserve: I tell you, that to abide faithful to important duties, we must incessantly weaken the passions which continually keep us from their performance; and that to temporize with them, under the pretence of not going too far, is to dig a precipice for ourselves. I tell you that it is only faithful and fervent souls, which avoid crimes, and shun all which may lead to their commission: I say it is only those souls which persevere, that are steadfast, that do honour to piety by a constant, regular, and uniform conduct; and that, on the contrary, it is only lukewarm and effeminate souls—souls which begin their penitence by setting bounds to piety, and by accommodating it to the pleasures and maxims of the world, that

draw back, that deceive themselves, that return to their vomit, and that dishonour piety by striking inconsistencies and irregularities, and sometimes by a life of retirement and virtue, and at other times by a life of weakness and of conformity to the world. And I here appeal to yourselves, my brethren; when you behold in the world a soul declining from its first love, and drawing a little nearer to those companies and pleasures which it previously so strictly denied itself—gradually declining in its love of retirement, in its modesty and circumspection, its prayers, its exact attention to duties,—do you not yourselves say that it is not far from a return to its former state? Do you not regard all that coldness as a prelude to a fall? And do you not reckon that virtue is almost extinct when you see it weakened? Is even so much necessary to awaken your censures and your fatal and malicious pre-sages against piety? How unjust are you! you condemn lukewarm and unfaithful virtue, and yet you condemn us when we require faithful and fervent virtue! You pretend that to persevere we must not aim too high; and yet you predict that a person is about to fall, as soon as he becomes lukewarm and negligent!

It is therefore only from a decrease of ardour that we should fear a relapse and a fall: it is not from giving up ourselves without reserve to God, that we imbibe a dislike to him, and that He forsakes us; it is by serving him in a cowardly manner: to come off with honour in the conflict is—not to temporize with the enemy, but to subdue him: the secret to avoid surprise is—not to slumber in slothfulness and idleness, but to look well to all our ways. We must not therefore fear to do too much, lest we should not be able to persevere; to merit the grace of perseverance, we must, on the contrary, leave nothing to be done. What an illusion, my brethren! we fear zeal as though it were dangerous to perseverance, while it is zeal alone which obtains it. We entrench ourselves in a lukewarm and easy life, as the only one which can be lasting, while it is the

only one which deceives us; we shun fidelity as the fatal rock of piety, while piety without fidelity is never far from a shipwreck.

It is thus that lukewarmness removes from the faithful soul the grace of protection; and that this grace, being removed, deprives our faith of all its strength, the yoke of Christ of all its consolations, and leaves us in a state of weakness and declension, in which it is only necessary for innocence to have the misfortune to be attacked in order to fall. But if the loss of righteousness is the inevitable consequence of lukewarmness, on account of the grace which fails it, so is it likewise on account of the passions which are thereby strengthened.

Part II.—That which renders vigilance so necessary to Christian piety is this, that all those passions which are opposed to the law of God, die, so to speak, only with ourselves. We may indeed weaken them by the aids of grace, and of a lively and active faith; but their source and their roots always remain in the heart. We always carry within us the principles of the same errors which our tears have effaced: actual crimes may be dead in our hearts; but sin, as speaks the Apostle, that is to say, the corrupt inclinations which have occasioned all our crimes, dwell in them and still live,—and this fund of corruption which had separated us from God, is still left to us in penitence, to serve as a continual trial of our virtue, to render us more deserving of the crown by the continual calls to combat which it excites, to humble our pride, to cause us to remember that the time of the present life is a time of warfare and danger; and that by a destiny inevitable to the condition of our nature, there is seldom more than a single step to be taken to lead us from a state of coldness to a course of vice.

It is true that the grace of Jesus Christ is given us to suppress those corrupt propensities which survive our conversion: but grace, as we have just observed, offers scarcely

any thing to the lukewarm besides general succours, and the grace of protection, of which we have rendered ourselves unworthy, being more rarely afforded or entirely suspended, it is evident that the passions must from that very circumstance acquire new strength. But I say that the passions not only acquire strength in a lukewarm and unfaithful life, because the grace of protection which weakens them is more rarely afforded, but also from the very nature of coldness and lukewarmness itself: for a lukewarm and unfaithful life being nothing but a continual indulgence allowed to all the passions; a pliant facility continually to grant them, to a certain point, every thing which flatters them; nay, a solicitude, arising from self-love, to remove every thing that can either arrest or control them, and a perpetual use of every thing which is the most capable of enflaming them,—it is evident that they must every day acquire new strength.

Indeed, my brethren, we must not imagine that, by indulging our passions only within certain allowed bounds, we shall appease them—that we shall, so to speak, grant them sufficient to satisfy them, but not to defile our minds and to occasion trouble and remorse of conscience; we must not imagine that we can ever attain to a certain state of equilibrium between vice and virtue, in which our passions will, on the one hand, be satisfied with the allowance which we grant them; and on the other, our consciences will be quiet through the absence of the vices which we avoid. For such is the plan which the lukewarm soul forms for itself—a plan favourable to its indolence and laziness, because it equally banishes all that is painful either in vice or in virtue: it denies to the passions every thing that might disturb the conscience, and to virtue every thing that too much incommodes and mortifies our self-love; but this state of equipoise and of equality is a chimera. The passions know no bounds even in vice: how then can they be restricted to those of lukewarmness? excess cannot satisfy and fix them? The more you allow them, the more you put it out of your

power to deny them any thing. The true secret to appease them is—not to favour them to a certain degree, but to combat them in every thing. Every indulgence renders them more fierce and outrageous: it is like a little water thrown into a fire, which, instead of abating, increases its energy; it is a little food presented to a ravenous lion, which, instead of satisfying his hunger, renders him more lively and violent: every thing that flatters the passions, irritates and provokes them.

Now, this is the state of lukewarm and unfaithful souls: it permits all animosity that does not proceed to open revenge: it justifies every pleasure in which we do not discern evident crime: it seeks every ornament and artifice in which decency is not outraged, and in which there is no reference either to a sinful passion or an evident design: it unreservedly gives up itself to every degree of ardour in the pursuit of advancement and fortune, which does not injure another: it makes no scruple of every omission which appears to relate to certain arbitrary duties, or which but slightly affects essential duties: it reckons as nothing all love of the body and of the person, which does not directly lead to vice: it makes a merit of all delicacies relating to rank and glory which can consist with the moderation which the world itself demands. Now, what is the result? Do you wish to know? then I beg you to listen to the following reflections.

First, that all those inclinations in us which are opposed to the Divine rule and to our duty continually acquiring strength, both the Divine rule and our duty have afterwards to encounter insurmountable difficulties; so that to fulfil them, in any important particular in which the law of God demands submission, is to ascend a rapid stream, in opposition to an impetuous current, or to arrest the course of a furious unbroken horse on the brink of a precipice. Thus your sensibility of injuries, always too readily listened to, does to such a degree excite your pride that when at any time it becomes a question whether you shall pardon in a particular instance, in which you think your honour

essentially concerned, you no longer have the control of your resentment, but yield up your hearts to all the virulence of hatred and revenge. Thus this care, this eagerness to cultivate the esteem of men, has to such a degree strengthened in your hearts a desire to deserve their praise, and to retain their suffrage, that in an important case in which it may be required to sacrifice to duty the vanity of their good opinion, and to expose yourselves to their censure and derision, not to be wanting in attention to your souls, the love of vanity triumphs over that of truth, and a regard to human opinion is stronger than the fear of God: hence, the eager desire for fortune and advancement long indulged, has given ambition such a dominion over your hearts, that in a delicate conjuncture, in which it is necessary to destroy a rival in order to raise yourselves, you sacrifice your consciences to your fortune, and become unjust towards your brother, through fear of being inattentive to your own interests: hence, finally, to avoid entering too much into particulars, those suspicious attachments, that free discourse, those too great compliances, those desires too much indulged of pleasing men have produced dispositions in you so bordering on vice and voluptuousness that you are no longer in a condition to resist, in a season of danger, when it becomes a question whether you shall proceed still further: corruption excited by the whole course of your former proceedings, instantly takes fire; your weakness prevails over your judgment; your hearts resist the suggestions of honour, glory, duty, and interest. We do not long remain faithful, when we find in ourselves so many motives to unfaithfulness.

Hence, you yourselves will be surprised at your weakness: you will again ask yourselves what is become of that modesty and virtue which formerly inspired you with such an abhorrence of vice: you will no longer recognise yourselves: you will perceive in yourselves an unhappy and a violent propensity, which you, unknown to yourselves, carried in your souls: by little and little this state will

appear to you less awful. The heart soon justifies every thing that captivates it; that which pleases us does not long alarm us; and to the misfortune of a fall, you will add the misfortunes of calmness and security.

Such is the inevitable destiny of a lukewarm and unfaithful life: the passions which we have too much indulged, arrived at a certain point, become absolute; as the young lions, saith the prophet, which we feed without precaution, at length grow up and devour the indiscreet hand which contributed to strengthen them and to render them formidable. Then, when too late, you in vain review your conduct; you have cherished the profane fire in your hearts; it must at length burst forth: you have nourished the venom within you; it must prevail; and it is then too late to have recourse to the remedy. You should have done so earlier; the evil was not at the first without resource: you have left it to acquire strength—you have irritated it by every means which might render it more incurable: it must gain the dominion, and you must become the victim of your own indiscretion and indulgence.

Besides, do you not daily tell us, my brethren, that you have the best intentions—that you wish to do better than you do, and that you seem to yourselves to be sincerely desirous of being saved; but that a thousand circumstances arise in life, in which you forget all your good resolutions, and in which you must be saints not to be led astray. And this is the very thing that we tell you, that, in spite of all your pretended good intentions, if you do not flee, if you do not combat, if you do not watch, if you do not pray, if you do not constantly do violence to yourselves, a thousand occasions will present themselves in which you will no longer be able to surmount your weakness: this is what we tell you—that only a mortified and watchful life can secure us in seasons of temptation and danger—that we deceive ourselves in thinking that we shall be faithful in those moments in which we are violently attacked, when we meet such seasons with a mind weak and wavering,

and just ready to yield ; that it is only the house built upon a rock which resists the wind and the storm ; that it is only the vineyard surrounded with a deep trench, and fortified with an impregnable tower, that is freed from the insults of those who pass by ; in a word, that to live exempt from vice, we must be saints and be firmly established in virtue.

And when I say that we must be holy ; alas ! my brethren, even the most fervent and faithful souls, with mortified propensities, with a flesh weakened by the rigours of penitence, with an imagination purified by prayer, with a mind fed with truth and with the meditation of the law of God, with a faith strengthened by the sacraments and by retirement, find themselves sometimes in such terrible circumstances, that their hearts are shocked and their imaginations are disturbed and wander : they find themselves in such a state of agitation as to float for a considerable time between victory and death, and are, like a ship contending with the waves of an enraged sea, expecting safety only from Him who commands the winds and the storm. And can *you*, with a heart already half seduced, with propensities nearly approaching to vice,—can *you* expect that your weakness will be proof against events, and that the most violent temptations will find you always calm and inaccessible ? Can *you* expect that in a state of lukewarmness, sensuality, and worldly-mindedness, your souls will meet temptation with that faith and strength which even the most affectionate and faithful piety does not always confer ? Can *you* expect that passions, flattered, nourished, humoured, and strengthened, will remain docile, motionless, and calm, in the presence of objects the most capable of enkindling them,—those passions which at times, after a long discipline and a life of prayer and watchfulness, awake all at once, even at a distance from scenes of danger, and make the most righteous feel, by mournful experience, that we must never slumber, and that the highest pitch of virtue is sometimes only the moment which precedes a fall ? This is our situation, my

brethren : we are clear-sighted only respecting the dangers which relate to our fortune or our life, while we are ignorant of those which threaten our salvation. But let us undeceive ourselves : to avoid crimes, something more is necessary than lukewarmness and the indolence of virtue ; and watchfulness is the only means which Jesus Christ has left to us to preserve our innocence. This is the first reflection.

A second reflection which we may make respecting this truth is this, That the passions daily acquire strength in a lukewarm and faithless life ; for while duty finds insurmountable opposition within us, the path of vice is, so to speak, made smooth, so that no more repugnance is felt to it than to a trifling fault. In fact, the heart by those daily infidelities which are inseparable from lukewarmness, arrives at length, by numerous insensible steps, at those perilous limits which separate, by a small point, life from death, and vice from innocence, and it leaps over this last line of separation without scarcely perceiving it : as there remained only a small space to pass, and as there was no occasion for any fresh effort to pass it, it did not suppose that it had gone farther than on former occasions : it had cherished dispositions so nearly approaching to vice, that it brought forth iniquity without pain, without difficulty, without any perceptible effort, without even perceiving it ; like a dying person, who, through the languors of a long and painful disease, is brought so near to his end, that the last sigh, resembling those which preceded it, occasions him no further difficulty, and leaves the spectators uncertain whether his last moment is arrived or whether he still breathes : and that which renders the condition of a lukewarm soul still more dangerous is this, that it commonly dies to Divine things without being aware of it. We become enemies to God, while we still live with him as a friend : we continue in the practice of holy services, while we have lost the grace which gives us a right to approach them.

Hence, let not the souls whom this discourse regards, deceive themselves, because they have perhaps hitherto

kept themselves from any gross iniquity ; their state is, without doubt, on that account the more dangerous before God. The most alarming penalty of their lukewarmness perhaps is this, that, already dead in his eyes, they live without any evident declension—that they sleep quietly in death under an appearance of life, which gives them confidence—that they add to the danger of their condition a false peace, which confirms them in that dark and delusive way—finally, that the Lord, by secret and terrible judgments, strikes them with blindness, and punishes the depravity of their hearts, by permitting them to remain ignorant of their state. A gross fall would be, if I dare so to speak, a token of the kindness and mercy of God towards them : they would then at least open their eyes : their unveiled and evident guilt would at least trouble and disquiet their consciences : their disease being at length known would perhaps induce them to have recourse to the remedy : while their apparently regular life lulls them to sleep and quiets them—renders the example of fervent souls useless—persuades them that such great fervour is unnecessary—that it is more the result of constitution than of grace—that it is zeal rather than duty ; and it leads them to listen to all that is taught them in these Christian pulpits, respecting the inevitable falls of a lukewarm and faithless life, as foolish exaggerations. This is the second reflection.

Finally, a last reflection to be made upon this truth, is this, That our hearts are wont to stop far short of what they propose. A thousand times have we made holy resolutions—have we proposed to carry to a certain point particular duties and modes of life ; but in the execution of our projects our ardour has always diminished, and we have stopped far short of the height to which we proposed to aspire : hence a lukewarm soul proposing, as the highest pitch of its virtue, the avoidance of vice,—looking at the letter of the precept, that is to say, at that strict and precise point of the law beneath which immediate transgression and death is found,—it infallibly rests beneath it,

and never arrives at that necessary point which it had proposed to itself : it is therefore an incontestable maxim, that we must undertake much in order to execute a little, and take a lofty aim to reach even to mediocrity. Now, this maxim, so certain even with respect to the most righteous, is infinitely more so with respect to a lukewarm and faithless soul : because lukewarmness augments the burden of its obligations, and increases the weight of its corruptions and miseries, it ought, especially, to make a great effort to attain even to the lowest degree, and to propose to itself the full extent of what is recommended, if it wishes to rest in the observance of the mere letter of the precept ; it is with reference to such a soul that it is especially true to say, that by aiming merely to avoid crime, burdened as it is with the weight of its lukewarmness and infidelity, it will always fall very far short of the place to which it thought to arrive ; and as immediately below that convenient and sensual virtue there is nothing but vice, the very effort which it thought to make in order to avoid it only serves to lead it to its commission. Such are the reasons, all derived from the weakness which confirmed sinful habits leave in a lukewarm and faithless soul, and which inevitably conduct it to a fall.

Yet, the sole reason which you allege for abiding in that dangerous state is, that you are weak, and that you cannot maintain a more retired, thoughtful, mortified, and perfect course of life. But it is because you are weak, that is to say, wholly averse to virtue, strongly attached to the world, and entirely subject to your senses, that a retired, mortified life becomes indispensable to you : it is because you are weak, that you ought the more carefully to shun temptations and dangers—to do the greater violence to yourselves ; to pray, to watch, and to deny yourselves the most innocent pleasures, and to attend to the holy excesses of zeal and fervour, that they may become a support to your weakness. You are weak ! and because you are

weak do you think that you are permitted to expose yourselves more than others—to be less fearful of danger—to be more easy in the neglect of the remedy—to grant greater indulgence to your senses—to retain a greater attachment to the world and to every thing that can corrupt your hearts? What an illusion! Do you then make your weakness the title to your security? Do you then derive, from your need of watchfulness and prayer, the privilege which exempts you from attending to them? And how long is it since the sick have been allowed to indulge in greater excess, and to use less precaution than those who are in perfect health? Privations have always been appointed to the weak and infirm; and to plead your weakness to excuse yourselves from a more fervent and Christian life, is to allege your diseases to persuade us that you have no need of the remedy. This second reflection is derived from those passions which are strengthened by lukewarmness, and which prove that that state always terminates in a fall, and in the loss of righteousness.

To all these reasons I ought to add a third, derived from the exterior aids of religion, which are necessary to sustain piety, and which become useless to the lukewarm and faithless soul.

The sacraments are not only useless, they even become dangerous to it, either through the lukewarmness with which it approaches them, or through the vain confidence with which they inspire it: they are no longer resources to it: they are customary remedies which have lost their efficacy, if I dare so to speak; which amuse, but which do not heal its languor: it is strong meat, which, instead of restoring, completes the ruin of a weak stomach: it is the breath of the Holy Spirit, which, incapable of rekindling the still smoking brand, completely extinguishes it: that is to say, that the grace of the sacraments, received into a lukewarm and faithless heart, no longer producing an increase of life and strength, sooner or later produces death.

and condemnation, which are always connected with the abuse of these Divine remedies.

Prayer, that channel of grace, that support of the faithful heart, that solace of piety, that asylum from all the attacks of the enemy, that cry of the contrite soul which causes the Lord to be so attentive to its wants; prayer, without which God no longer manifests himself to us, we no longer know our Father, we no longer give thanks to our Benefactor, we no longer appease our Judge, and we no longer shew our wounds to our Physician, but live without God in the world; finally, prayer, so necessary to the most confirmed virtue, is no more to the lukewarm soul than the idle employment of an erring spirit, of a barren heart, divided between a thousand wandering affections. It no longer derives from it that delight, that composure, and those consolations which are the fruits of a fervent and faithful life: it no longer sees therein those sacred truths in that new light which confirms a soul in the contempt of the world and in the love of eternal blessings, and which, on retiring from it, causes it to regard with increasing aversion, every thing that foolish men admire; it no longer comes forth from the exercise, animated with that lively faith, which counts as nothing the trials and impediments to virtue, but which endures with a holy zeal, all its accompanying bitters; it does not at going from it feel a greater love to duty, a greater horror of the world, more resolution to flee from its perils, more light to discern its darkness and misery, more strength to hate and to combat its sinful nature, more fear of the judgments of God, more compunction for its weaknesses: it only leaves it more than ever fatigued with virtue, more full of the phantoms of the world, which, during the time it was at the Divine footstool, did, it seems, more violently agitate its imagination, defiled with all those images; more satisfied with having discharged a burdensome duty in which it found nothing more consoling than the pleasure of seeing it terminate; more eager to return to its amusements and

infidelities as a compensation for that moment of ennui and of trouble; in a word, more distant from God whom it had just provoked by the unbelief and irreverence of its prayer: this is all the fruit that it has derived from the exercise. Finally, all the exterior duties of religion which sustain and revive piety, are to the lukewarm soul only dead and lifeless practices, to which the heart is no longer attached, and which partake more of the habit than of the relish and spirit of piety, and to which, instead of every other disposition, it only carries the weariness that always attends a repetition of the same duties.

Hence, my brethren, grace in such a soul finds itself constantly attacked and weakened, either by the practices of the world in which it indulges itself—by those of piety, which it abuses—by the objects of sense, which feed its corruptions—by those of religion, which increase its disgusts—by the pleasures which dissipate it, or by the duties which weary it; all these inclining it towards its ruin, and nothing sustaining it, what destiny, alas! can it promise itself? Can the lamp destitute of oil long continue to give light? Can a tree which scarcely derives nourishment from the earth long be preserved from decay, and from being thrown into the fire? Now, such is the situation of the lukewarm soul: wholly given up to itself, nothing sustains it; wholly under the influence of weakness and languor, nothing protects it; wholly surrounded with objects of weariness and disgust, nothing revives it; every thing which consoles a righteous soul only increases its languor; every thing that supports a faithful soul disgusts and overwhelms it; every thing that renders the yoke of others light increases the weight of its own; and the aids afforded to piety become its fatigue or its crimes. Now, in this condition, O my God! almost forsaken by thy grace, wearied with thy yoke, dissatisfied with itself as much as with virtue, weakened by its diseases and by the remedies resorted to, faltering at every step, a mere breath prostrates it; it, of itself, inclines towards a fall, without being im-

pelled by any external agency, and, to behold its fall, it is not necessary even to see it attacked.

Such are the reasons which prove the certain fall of a person leading a lukewarm and faithless life. But are many proofs necessary, my dear hearer, in a case in which your own misfortunes have so sadly instructed you? "Remember from whence thou art fallen," as the Spirit of God formerly said to a lukewarm soul (Rev. ii. 5). Go back to the source of the disorderly practices in which you still grovel: you will discover it in the negligence and infidelity of which we speak. A rising passion too little resisted, a scene of danger too much frequented, pious duties too often omitted or despised, bodily conveniences too eagerly sought, desires to please too much regarded, dangerous writings not sufficiently avoided: the source is scarcely perceptible, but the torrent of iniquity which has flowed from it has wholly inundated your soul; it was only a spark which kindled this great fire; it was a little leaven which has leavened and corrupted the whole mass. "Remember from whence thou art fallen." Remember it: you never could have thought of arriving where you are; you listened to every thing taught you upon that subject as the exaggerations of zeal and spirituality; you could have answered for yourself respecting certain steps which now scarcely occasion you any remorse. "Remember from whence thou art fallen:" consider the depth of the abyss into which you are sunk; indifference and trifling infidelities have by degrees conducted you thither. Remember it, I again repeat; and see whether you can call that a secure state which has led you to the very edge of the precipice.

Such is the common artifice of the devil: he knows that it is necessary to steel a timid conscience by little and little against the horrors of vice, and at first to propose only virtuous ends and certain boundaries to pleasure: he does not, in the first instance, attack as a lion; but as a serpent; he does not conduct you directly to the gulph; he leads you thither by a circuitous way. No, my brethren, glaring

crimes are never the first essays made by the heart. David was self-indulgent and remiss, before he committed adultery: Solomon suffered himself to be softened by the magnificence and the delights of royalty, before he appeared upon the high places surrounded by strange women; Judas loved money, before he fixed a price upon his Master; Peter was self-confident, before he denied Him. Vice, as well as virtue, has its progressive steps: as day teacheth day, saith the prophet, so night giveth sad lessons to night; and the distance is not great between the state which suspends the grace of protection—which fortifies the sinful passions—which renders all the succours of piety useless, and the state in which it is at length wholly extinguished.

What is there more, my dear hearer, that can give you confidence in this life of negligence and infidelity? Can it be that exemption from vice in which you are as yet preserved? I have shewn you that that state is either a criminal state, or that it will soon infallibly lead you to one. Can it be the love of repose? But you neither find in it the pleasures of the world nor the consolations of virtue. Can it be an assurance that God requires no more? But how can the lukewarm soul satisfy and please Him, since He casts it out of His mouth? Can it be the irregularities of almost all who surround you, and who live in the excesses which you avoid? But their condition is perhaps less to be pitied and less desperate than yours: they are at least acquainted with their disease, while you take yours to be a state of perfect health. Can it be the fear of not being able to maintain a more vigilant, a more mortified, a more Christian life? But since you have been able to preserve some remains of virtue and innocence until now, without the sweets and the consolations of grace, and notwithstanding the weariness and the aversions which your lukewarmness has shed over all your duties; what will be the effect when the Spirit of God shall sweeten the yoke, and when a more faithful and fervent course shall have restored to you all the graces and all the consolations of which y

lukewarmness has deprived you ? Piety is dull and insupportable only when it is lukewarm and unfaithful.

Rise then, saith the prophet, indolent and cowardly soul—break the fatal charm which lulls thee to sleep, and which makes thee the slave of thy native slothfulness ! The Lord whom thou thinkest thou servest because thou dost not openly insult Him, is not the God of cowards, but of the valiant : He is not the rewarder of idleness and indolence, but of tears, of watchfulness, and of conflicts : He does not make the useless servant ruler over His goods and over His everlasting city, but the laborious and watchful servant ; and His kingdom, saith the Apostle, is not flesh and blood : that is to say, not an unworthy effeminacy and a life of sense ; but the strength and virtue of God—an active faith, a constant watchfulness, a generous sacrifice of all our propensities, a continual contempt of every thing that takes place, and an affectionate and ardent desire of those invisible blessings which will never pass away : this is my desire for you. Amen !

SERMON VIII.

ON PRAYER.

MATTHEW XV. 22.

O Lord, thou Son of David, have mercy on me.

SUCH is the petition of a soul sensibly affected with its miseries, and which addresses itself to the Sovereign Physician, in whose compassion alone it hopes for relief. This was the prayer of the woman of Canaan, who sought from the Son of David the cure of her daughter. Convinced of His ability, and expecting every thing from His compassion towards the miserable, she knew no more certain method to render Him propitious than the utterance of her grief, and the simple recital of her misfortune. And this is the model of prayer which the church this day sets before us, to animate us and to teach us to pray ; that is to say, to render this most essential duty of Christian piety more agreeable and familiar.

For, my brethren, to pray belongs to the condition of man ; it is the first duty, the only resource, the constant consolation of man ; or, to adopt the language of the Holy Spirit, it is "the whole of man."

Yes, my brethren, if the whole world, in the midst of which we live, is only a continual temptation ; if the various situations in which we are placed, and all the objects that surround us, appear to be in league with our depravity, either to weaken or to seduce us ; if riches corrupt us, and indigence embitters our tempers ; if prosperity lifts us up, and afflictions cast us down ; if business dissipates our minds, and repose enervates them ; if knowledge puffs us

up, and ignorance leads us astray ; if social intercourse carries us too much abroad, and solitude leaves us too much alone ; if pleasures seduce us, and holy duties fill us with pride ; if health awakens our passions, while sickness either nourishes our lukewarmness or our complaints : in a word, if since the fall of man, every thing within us, or around us, becomes a source of danger ; in so deplorable a condition, what hope of salvation, O my God ! can remain to man, if he does not, from the depth of his misery, incessantly cause his groans to ascend towards Thy throne of mercy, that Thou mayest deign to appear, to put a restraint upon his unruly passions, to rectify his mistakes, to sustain his weakness, to alleviate his temptations, to shorten his hours of conflict, and to lift him up when he falleth.

The Christian is therefore a man of prayer : his origin, his situation, his nature, his wants, his habitation, every thing admonishes him to pray. The Church herself, in which the grace of regeneration has incorporated him, is a stranger upon the earth, continually sighing and mourning : she recognises her children only by their incessantly sighing after their better country ; and the Christian who does not pray, cuts himself off from the assembly of the saints, and is worse than an infidel.

Whence is it then, my brethren, that so essential a duty, and one so consolatory to man, is at this day so much neglected ? Whence is it that it is regarded either as a sad and wearisome duty, or as the occupation only of retired souls ; so that our instructions respecting prayer scarcely interest those who listen to us, from the persuasion that they are more suited to the cloisters than to the court ?

Whence then, my brethren, cometh this abuse, and this universal forgetfulness of prayer in the world ? It proceeds from two causes, which I wish this day to oppose. First, men do not pray, because they do not, they say, know how to pray, and that they should lose their time in so doing : Secondly, they do not pray, because they experience those wanderings in prayer, they say, which render it insipid and

insupportable. The first cause is drawn from their ignorance respecting the manner in which they should pray. The second from their aversion to prayer, and the difficulties which they find in the duty. We must therefore, in the first place, teach you to pray, as you know not how to do so. We must then, in the second place, render the duty of prayer more easy, since you find so much pain and difficulty in its performance.

Part I.—The precepts which I prescribe to you, said the Lord formerly to his people, are not above your power, nor beyond the reach of your mental ability: they are not secrets hidden in heaven, that you should say, Who shall go up for us to heaven and bring them down to us? neither are they instructions which are to be obtained beyond the seas, that you should say, Who shall go over the seas for us to learn them? They are duties within your power, that are nigh unto you, even in your mouths and in your hearts: so that you have no longer any excuse to oppose to me, if you dispense with their observation: *Sed juxta te est sermo, in ore tuo, et in corde tuo, ut facias illum.* Deut. xxx. 14.

Now, what the Lord says in general respecting all the precepts of His holy law; namely, that it is not necessary to seek the knowledge of them out of ourselves, that they are all in our hearts and in our mouths; we may more particularly apply to the duty of prayer, which is, as it were, the first and the most necessary of them all.

Yet, that which is most frequently opposed to this duty by men of the world is this, that they know not what to say to God when they come to present themselves before Him in prayer, and that prayer is a secret which they have not, as yet, been enabled to comprehend. I say then, that this excuse arises from three sinful sources: the first is this, That they deceive themselves in the idea which they entertain of prayer; the second is, That they are not sufficiently sensible of their miseries and wants; the third is, That they are destitute of love to God.

I say, first, that they deceive themselves in the idea which they entertain of prayer. Indeed, my brethren, prayer is not an effort of the mind, an arrangement of ideas, a deep acquaintance with the mysteries and counsels of God : it is a simple inclination of the mind—it is the sighing of a soul sensibly affected with a view of its miseries—it is a lively and secret feeling of our wants and weaknesses, and a humble confidence in the Lord, which spreads them before Him to obtain a deliverance and a remedy. To pray, does not suppose that the person so engaged possesses great light, extraordinary knowledge, a more elevated and cultivated mind than other men ; it only supposes that he possesses more faith, greater contrition, and a more earnest desire to be delivered from his temptations and miseries. Prayer is not a secret, or a science, that is learnt of man—an abstruse art and practice, concerning which it is necessary to consult skilful masters, in order to learn the rules and precepts relating to it. The means or maxims which some, in our days, have wished to give us relating to it, are either singular methods which we must never propose as models, or the vain speculations of an idle spirit, or a fanaticism which leads to every extravagance ; and which, instead of edifying the church, has deserved its censure, and furnished the ungodly with new subjects of derision against it, and the world with new excuses to despise and dislike prayer. Prayer is a duty respecting which we are all instructed by nature : the rules of this Divine science are written only in our hearts, and the Spirit of God is the only Master which teaches them.

A simple and innocent person, who is penetrated with the greatness of God—who is struck with the terror of his judgments—who is affected with his infinite mercies—who is ignorant of almost every thing except to humble himself in the Divine presence, to acknowledge his goodness and wonders in the simplicity of his heart, to adore the dispensations of his providence towards him, to accept the crosses and pains which his wise counsels impose upon

him—who is acquainted with no more sublime prayer than to lament before God all the depravity of his heart, to groan under a sense of his hardness and opposition to all good, to entreat him with a lively faith to convert him, to destroy the body of sin within him, which, in spite of his strongest resolutions daily leads him to so many false steps in the ways of God: a soul of this description is a thousand times better instructed respecting the nature of prayer than even teachers and doctors, and may say with the prophet: *Super omnes docentes me intellexi* (Psalm cxix. 99): “I have more understanding than all my teachers.” He speaks to his God as one friend to another; he grieves that he has displeased him; he reproaches himself that he has not sufficient courage to renounce every thing to please him: he is not elevated by the sublimity of his thoughts; he allows his heart to speak; he gives up himself to all his tender feelings, before the sole object of his affections. Even when his mind wanders, his heart watches and speaks in his behalf; and his aversion becomes a prayer, by the sentiments which are then formed in his breast: he sighs—is melted—is displeased with himself; he feels the weight of his bonds; he stirs up himself to weaken them, and to disengage himself from them; he a thousand times renews his protestations of fidelity; he blushes and is confounded, because he continually finds himself unfaithful to his vows: this is the whole secret, and the whole art of prayer. And what is there therein which is not within the reach of every believer?

Who taught this poor Canaanitish woman to pray? She was a stranger, a daughter of Tyre and Sidon, who was ignorant of the wonderful things in the Law and the Prophets—who had not, as yet, heard the words of eternal life from the mouth of the Saviour—who was sitting in darkness, and in the shadow of death; yet she prays. She does not address herself to the Apostles, to teach her the rules of prayer: her love, her confidence, the desire

of being heard taught her how to pray : her heart was affected ; in this consisted the whole merit and sublimity of her prayer.

And verily, if to pray it were necessary to rise to those sublimities of prayer to which God elevated some saints ; if it were necessary to be, like Paul, caught up to heaven to hear the ineffable secrets which God never makes known to man, and which man is not permitted to reveal—or to be placed, like Moses, on the holy mountain in a cloud of glory, and to behold God face to face,—that is to say, if it were necessary to have attained to this degree of intimate union with the Lord, in which the soul, as if it were already stripped of its body, raises itself even to the bosom of God himself—contemplates at leisure his infinite perfections—forgets, so to speak, his members which are upon the earth—is no longer troubled, nor even diverted, by the phantoms of sense—is fixed and absorbed in the contemplation of the greatness of God, and of his wondrous works, and, already participating of his eternity, would reckon a whole age passed in that happy state, as only a short and rapid moment ; if, I say, to pray, it were necessary to be favoured with those rare and extraordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit, you might tell us, like those new believers of whom St. Paul speaks, that you have not received them, and that you do not even know the Holy Spirit who communicates them.

But prayer is not a gift that is confined to certain privileged persons ; it is a duty imposed upon every believer : it is not a virtue confined to a state of perfection, and reserved to certain more pure and holy saints ; it is, like charity, an indispensable virtue—needful both to the perfect and to the imperfect ; within the reach both of the learned and of the ignorant ; imposed both on the simple and on the most enlightened : it is a virtue absolutely necessary to every man ; it is a science belonging to every believer, and the perfection of every creature. Every one that has a heart, and who is capable of loving the Author

of his being; every one that is capable of knowing the nothingness of the creature and the greatness of God, ought to know how to adore him—to give him thanks—to run to him—to appease him when He is irritated—to call to him when he is distant—to thank him when He favours him—to humble himself before him when He strikes him—to spread his wants before him or to crave his favours.

Besides, when the disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray; *Dóce nos orare* (Luke xi. 1); He did not shew them the height, the sublimity, the depth of the mysteries of God: He only taught them that to pray it was necessary to regard God as a tender, beneficent, and attentive Father—to address themselves to him with a respectful familiarity, with a confidence resulting from fear and love—to tell him our weakness and misery—to derive our language from our hearts; not aiming to elevate ourselves to him, but to bring him near to us—to spread before him our wants—to implore his aid—to desire all men to adore and to bless him—that He would come and establish his reign in every heart—that the heavens and the earth should be subject to his sacred will—that sinners should come into the way of righteousness—that infidels should come to the knowledge of the truth—that He should forgive our offences—that He should preserve us from temptation—that He should lend a helping hand to our weakness, and that He should deliver us from our miseries. All is simple, but all is great in that Divine prayer: it recalls man to himself: and to follow that model, it is only necessary to feel our wants and to desire deliverance.

And this is the reason that led me to observe, that the second sinful source of the excuse founded upon our not being able to pray, is this, that we are not sufficiently sensible of the almost infinite necessities of our souls. For I would inquire, my brethren, whether it is necessary to teach a sick person in what manner to ask for his cure

—a man pressed with hunger, how to solicit food—an unfortunate person, beaten by the tempest and on the point of shipwreck, how to implore aid? Alas! does not his necessity furnish him with expressions? Does he not find, in the calamities which he endures, that lively eloquence, those persuasive emotions, those pressing remonstrances, which solicit the remedy? Do the afflicted require a master to teach them in what manner to complain? In them every thing speaks—every thing expresses their grief—every thing announces their pain—every thing solicits relief: their very silence is eloquent.

Even you who complain that you know not how to pray; in your temporal afflictions, as soon as a painful disease threatens your life, as an unexpected event puts your property and fortune in danger, as death appears on the point of taking away a person either dear or necessary to you, you lift up your hands to Heaven—you send up your groans and prayers—you address yourselves to God, who wounds and who heals: it is then that you know how to pray; you do not seek without yourselves for lessons and rules, to teach you to spread your distress before him; neither do you consult skilful masters to teach you what you must say to him: your griefs and your calamities sufficiently instruct you.

Ah, my brethren! if we felt the miseries of our souls, as we feel those of our bodies; if our eternal salvation interested us as much as a sordid fortune, or as our weak and declining health, we should be skilful in the Divine art of prayer; we should not complain that we had nothing to say in the presence of God, from whom we have so much to ask; we should not be at a loss to find wherewith to commune with him; our calamities would speak; our hearts would, in spite of ourselves, escape in holy emotions, like that of the mother of Samuel, before the ark of the Lord! we should no longer have the command of our grief and of our tears; and the most certain evidence of our being destitute of faith, and that we do

not know ourselves, is this, that we know not what to say to the Lord during the time assigned for a short prayer.

And, my brethren, is it possible that, in the miserable condition of the present life; surrounded as we are with so many dangers, leavened with so many weaknesses; on the point of being every moment seduced by vain objects, corrupted by the illusions of the senses, led along by the force of examples; a prey to the tyranny of our propensities, to the empire of the flesh, to the inconstancy of our hearts, to the uncertainties of our reason, to the caprices of our imagination, to the perpetual variations of our humours—depressed by disgrace, puffed up by prosperity; softened by abundance, soured by necessity, carried away by fashion shaken by events, flattered by praise, grieved by contempt, always halting between our passions and our duty, between ourselves and the law of God: is it possible that in so deplorable a condition, we should be at a loss, what to request of the Lord, or what to say to him, when we appear in his presence? O my God! why is man so miserable? or why is he not better acquainted with his misery?

Ah! if, my dear hearer, you were to tell us that you know not where to begin in prayer—if you were to tell us that your wants were infinite—that your miseries and passions were so multiplied that you should never have done, if you attempted to spread them all before the Lord: if you were to tell us, that the more deeply you searched into your hearts, the more wounds were laid open, the more corruptions and disorders you discovered; and that, despairing of the ability to enumerate the infinite particulars of your weakness before the Lord, you presented to him your whole heart; you left your calamities to speak for you; your confusion, your humiliation, and your silence, to constitute the whole art of your prayer; and that from having too much to tell him you could tell him nothing: if you were to speak this language, you would speak the

language of faith, the language of a penitent king, who, from a view of his transgressions, no longer daring to speak to his God in prayer, said, " Lord, I held my peace in thy presence! my humiliation and confusion spoke for me : " *Obmutui, et humiliatus sum.* (Ps. xxxix. 2.) And then, in that silence arising from shame and contrition, my sorrow for my crimes is renewed : *Et dolor meus renovatus est.* My heart penetrated with a sense of my ingratitude and miseries felt itself inflamed with renewed love to thee : *Concaluit cor meum intra me, et in meditatione mea exardescet ignes.* And all that I could say to thee, O my God, in the deep humiliation in which the view of my miseries kept me before thee, was, that every man is only an abyss of weakness and depravity, of vanity and lies. *Locutus sum in lingua mea. Verumtamen universa vanitas, omnis homo vivens.* Such is the silence of contrition which sincere prayer excites when we come before God.

But for you to complain that you have nothing to say when you wish to pray: what! my dear hearer, do not your past crimes, when you present yourself before God, furnish you with any cause for alarm from his judgments, or with any thing to request from his mercy? What! when your whole life has probably been an abyss of disorder; when you have abused the grace of God, your talents, your reason, your property, your dignities, and every creature; when you have past the best part of your days in the forgetfulness of God, in the erroneous ways of the world and of the passions; when you have degraded your mind by sinful attachments, defiled your body, shocked your senses, disordered your imagination, weakened your convictions, and extinguished every thing favourable which natural inclination had conferred on your soul; and does this recollection furnish you with nothing to say before God? and does it not suggest to you how you should resort to him to obtain the pardon of your numerous sins? And have you nothing to say to God whom you have so long

insulted? O man! you must either be without the hope of salvation, or you must have other means to secure it than those of Divine clemency and mercy.

But I go still further, my dear hearer: if you lead a Christian life; if, having forsaken the world and its pleasures, you have at length entered into the ways of salvation; you are still more unreasonable in complaining that you find nothing to say to the Lord in prayer. What! the singular favour which he has shewn to you in enlightening your eyes, and undeceiving you respecting the world,—in withdrawing you from the depth of the abyss; does that rare favour, denied to so many sinners, excite no sentiments of gratitude in your heart when you are at his feet? Can that remembrance leave you cold and insensible? Does the presence of your benefactor awaken in you nothing that is tender—in *you*, who pride yourself in having never forgotten a favour—in *you* who put such a value upon your sensibility, and the excess of your gratitude towards your fellow-creatures?

Besides, my dear hearer, when your own miseries do not fill up the time of prayer, think of the calamities of the church—of the dissensions of pastors—of the spirit of schism and revolt which has been excited in the sanctuary—of the declensions of believers—of the general corruption of morals—of the sad increase of unbelief, and of the extinction of the faith amongst the people. Sigh over the scandals which you every day witness; lament before the Lord, like the prophet, that all have forsaken him—that every one seeks his own private interests; that even the salt of the earth has lost its savour, and that godliness is practised for worldly gain. Pray the Lord to complete the number of his elect, and to accomplish his designs towards his church. Pray for religious princes, for faithful pastors, for humble and enlightened teachers, for learned and disinterested guides, for zealous hermits, for chaste and exemplary virgins, for the peace of the churches, for the extirpation of error, the recovery of the vast numbers

whom the spirit of heresy * has seduced, and who have substituted new doctrines instead of the religion of their fathers.

What shall I say more? Beg him to convert your neighbours, your enemies, your protectors, your sovereigns; those whom you caused to fall, or to stumble; those whom you yourself formerly led astray from the paths of piety by your derisions and censures; those who perhaps owe wholly to the impiety of your discourse their irreligion and licentiousness; those whose virtue you perverted, or whose weakness you formerly seduced by your example or your solicitations. Are not those great, lamentable, and interesting objects, able to engage a moment's regard from you, or to excite the least sensibility in your heart? Every thing which surrounds you, teaches you to pray; every object, every event which takes place around you, affords you new motives to raise you to God; the public intercourse of the world, the privacy of retirement, the court, the city, the righteous, the wicked: public and private events; the misfortunes of some, and the prosperity of others; all that is presented to your eyes, furnishes you with subjects of lamentation, prayer, or thanksgiving. Every thing instructs your faith; every thing excites your zeal; every thing wounds your piety; every thing calls for your acknowledgments: and in the midst of so many subjects of prayer, do you not know how to furnish matter for a few moments' devotion? And surrounded with so many occasions to raise you to God, have you nothing to say when you appear in his presence? Ah! my friends, how distant must God be from the heart which has so much difficulty to keep up an intercourse with him; and how little must it love a Master and a Friend, to whom it can never find any thing to say!

And this is the last and the principal reason, which renders us incapable of prayer. We know not how to

* See Note H, in Appendix.

pray and converse with God, because we are destitute of love to him. When we love any one, the heart soon learns to converse with and to affect the object of its affection: it does not go far to learn what to say: alas! it does not even know how to express all that it feels. Let us restore order to our souls, my brethren; let us substitute God instead of the world: then our hearts will no longer be as strangers before the Lord. It is our disordered affections alone which unfit us for prayer; we know not how to ask for those eternal blessings for which we feel no love; we know not how to meditate upon truths which we do not relish; we have nothing to say to a God whom we scarcely know; we are ignorant how to solicit favours which we do not desire; we know not how to be importunate for a deliverance from the passions which we do not hate: in a word, prayer is the language of love; and we know not how to pray, because we are destitute of love.

But does it depend upon us, you will say, to have a relish for prayer? And how can you pray while you feel both an aversion to the duty, and a wandering mind, which you cannot controul, and which render it insupportable? This is the second excuse drawn from aversion to the duty, and from the difficulty of practising it.

Part II.—One of the greatest disorders occasioned by sin, is no doubt the backwardness and the natural aversion which we feel to prayer. Had man continued in innocence, he would have found all his delight in conversing with his God: the creatures would all have been an open book, in which he would incessantly have meditated upon his glorious and wonderful works: his senses, subject to his reason, would never have diverted him, in spite of himself, from the sweetness and the familiarity of the Divine presence: his whole life would have been a continual contemplation of the truth; and he would have been happy in a state of innocence, only because the Lord would in-

cessantly have communicated himself to him, and became he would never have lost sight of his God.

Man must therefore be greatly depraved, and sin must have made strange alterations, to cause that to be a pain to us which ought to be our felicity. It is nevertheless too true, that we almost all bear in our nature, this aversion and antipathy to prayer; and that is the most general excuse which is opposed to the performance of this duty, so essential to Christian piety. Even those persons, to whom the practice of virtue ought to have rendered the use of prayer more sweet and familiar, daily complain of aversion to the duty, and of the perpetual wanderings which they experience in that holy exercise; so that regarding it either as a burdensome duty, or as a needless inconvenience, they abridge its moments, and think themselves free from a yoke and from a painful subjection, when this time of weariness and of constraint is concluded.

Now, I say, that nothing is more unjust than to cease to pray on account of the aversion and wanderings of mind, which render it painful and disagreeable to us: because this aversion and these wanderings derive their source, in the first place, either from our lukewarmness, or our unfaithfulness: secondly, from our being so little in the habit of prayer: or, thirdly, in the wisdom of God who tries us, and wishes to purify our hearts, by withholding from us for a time the consolations of prayer.

Yes, my brethren, the first and most common source of our aversion to, and of our barrenness in prayer, is our lukewarmness and unfaithfulness. It is wrong indeed to pretend that we can carry with us to the exercise of prayer a serene and tranquil mind—an imagination, free from all those vain phantoms which agitate it—a heart affected and disposed to taste the presence of our God; while our whole life, although in other respects virtuous in the eyes of men, is a perpetual dissipation; while we live in the midst of objects the most suited to move the imagination, to make

those lively impressions which are never effaced ; in a word, that we should preserve in our hearts a thousand sinful attachments, which do not appear to us absolutely criminal, but which trouble, divide, and engage us, and which weaken in us, or altogether take from us, a delight in God, and in eternal things.

Alas ! my brethren, if the most retired and holy persons, if solitary penitents ; if an Anthony in the depth of the desert ; if a Jerome, weakened by continual mortifications and laborious studies ; if a Benoit, purified by long retirement, and a life altogether heavenly, still found in the mere recollection of their past practices, the grievous images which accompanied them even into the depth of the desert, which disturbed the sweetness and tranquillity of their prayers ; shall *we* pretend, that, in a life, which, I admit, may be regular, but which is full of agitations and circumstances which lead us astray, of objects which dissipate our minds, of temptations which trouble us, of discourses which shake our faith, of pleasures which enervate us, of fears or hopes which agitate us,—can *we*, I say, pretend that we shall find ourselves all at once new creatures in prayer ; purified from all those images which had just defiled our minds ; freed from all the sinful attachments which had perhaps just divided and corrupted our hearts ; delivered from all those agitations which had just made such violent and dangerous impressions upon our souls ; and, forgetting for a moment the whole world, and all those objects which we had just left, and which we all retain in our remembrance and in our hearts, that we should find ourselves, all at once, raised by God to the meditation of those celestial things, penetrated with the love of eternal blessings, full of compunction for a thousand infidelities, which we still love, and to a tranquillity of heart and mind, which the deepest retirement, and the most strict weanedness from the world, do not themselves sometimes confer. Ah ! my brethren, how unreasonable are we, and how will the complaints which we

incessantly make against the duties of piety, one day be turned into terrible reproaches against ourselves.

And to search still more deeply into this truth, and to enter into the particulars which will render it more evident; you complain, in the first place, that your mind is incapable of a moment's fixed attention in prayer, and that it incessantly wanders in spite of yourself. But how can you find it attentive and collected, if every thing that you do diverts and dissipates it, if you never examine the various particulars of your conduct; if you do not accustom yourself to this secret recollection, to the life of faith which finds, even in the midst of the dissipations of the world, the sources of holy reflection? To find a mind collected in prayer, it is necessary to carry that mind with us to the Throne of Grace: it is necessary that our very intercourse with sinners, when we are obliged to live in the midst of them; that a view of their passions, of their inquietudes, of their fears, of their hopes, of their joys, of their griefs, of their miseries, should furnish our faith with those subjects of reflection and motives to return to God, which prepare us for retirement and for the tranquillity of prayer. Then, on coming out from the world, and from worldly conversation, in which duty alone had engaged you, you will find no reluctance to enter into the presence of God, and to forget at his feet the vain agitations which you have just witnessed. On the contrary, the views of faith which you had preserved, the blindness of worldlings which you had *there* secretly lamented, will lead you to find fresh sweetness at the feet of Jesus Christ: *there* you will be relieved from the weariness of worldly dissipations and trifles; *there* you will, with a new feeling, sigh over the follies of men, who run with so much eagerness after a vapour, a happiness which flies from them, and which they will never secure, because the world in which they seek for it, is incapable of affording it: you will, with more ardour, thank the Lord, for having enlightened and distinguished you with so much kindness,

notwithstanding your crimes, from the multitude who will perish : you will there see, as in a new light, the happiness of those who serve him, and who, no longer deceived by vanity, live only for the truth.

You complain, secondly, that your heart, unaffected in prayer, experiences no lively feelings towards God, but only a dreadful aversion which renders him insupportable to your heart. But how can you expect that your heart, wholly engaged with the things of the earth, full of sinful attachments, of relish for the world, of self-love, of ambitious projects, perhaps of desires to please ; how can you expect that a heart prepossessed with so many worldly affections, should still find in itself any sensibility for heavenly things ? It is filled and occupied with created objects ; where can God find his place ? You cannot, at the same time, enjoy God and the world. Besides, as soon as the Israelites, after passing Jordan, had tasted the fruit of the land, the manna, saith the Scriptures, ceased to fall ; as though they could not, at the same time, partake both of the heavenly and of the earthly food, *Defecitque manna postquam comederunt de frugibus terra.*

The love of the world, said St. Augustin, like a dangerous fever, spreads a universal bitterness over the heart, which renders invisible and eternal blessings insipid and disgusting. Hence, you always carry to the Throne of Grace an insurmountable aversion to the duty of prayer. Ah ! it is an evidence that your heart is sick—that a secret fever, of which you are not perhaps aware, dejects, and consumes it, and deprives it of a spiritual appetite—that a foreign love possesses it. Go back to the source of your aversion to God, and to all that has a relation to Him ; and see if you do not find it in your sinful attachments : see if you are not too much devoted to yourself, to outward decorations, to a love of your person, to foolish friendships, to dangerous animosities, to secret jealousies, to ambitious desires, to every thing which surrounds you ; this is the source of the evil : apply the remedy to it ; every day impose some fresh restric-

tion upon yourself; labour earnestly to purify your heart: you will then taste the sweetness and the consolation of prayer; the world will then no longer engage your affections; and God will be found more lovely: we very soon ardently love the object to which we feel an exclusive attachment.

And here at least give glory to the truth: is it not true that in the days in which you kept the strictest watch over yourself—in which you offered to the Lord some sacrifice of your taste, of your sloth, of your humour, and of your aversion, that in those days you enjoyed most peace, joy, and consolation, in prayer? We meet with pleasure the eyes of a master to whom we have just given the most striking marks of fidelity; while we suffer in His presence, when we are sensible that He has a thousand just subjects of complaint against us; in such a case we are uneasy—we are under restraint—we are embarrassed, and, like the first sinner, we hide ourselves from Him; we no longer speak to Him with those pleasing emotions and with that confidence, which a pure conscience, that has nothing to reproach itself with, inspires; and we count the moments in which we are obliged to sustain the constraint and weariness of His sacred presence.

Besides, when Jesus Christ commanded us to pray, He began by ordering us to watch: *Vigilate et orate* (Matt. xxvi. 41): "Watch and pray." He deigns to teach us, by that means, that watchfulness is the only preparation for prayer; that, to love prayer, we must watch; and that the pleasure and consolations of prayer are granted only to retirement, and to the sacrifices of vigilance: *Vigilate et orate*. I know if you do not pray, that you cannot watch over yourself and love a holy life; and I know besides that if you do not live in that watchfulness which causes you to lead a holy life, you can never pray with pleasure and comfort. Prayer obtains for us the grace of vigilance, it is true; but it is still more true, that it is only by vigilance that we can procure the gift and the habit of prayer: *Vigilate et orate*: "Watch and pray."

And besides, my brethren, it is easy to conclude that, though a worldly life, even the most innocent,—that is to say, that though pleasures, perpetual games, worldly dissipations, and theatrical amusements, which you call innocent,—should have no other inconvenience than to unfit you for prayer; that though this worldly life, which you are so eager to justify, possessed nothing more criminal than to create in you an aversion to prayer, to dry up your souls, to dissipate your imagination, to weaken your faith, and to leave trouble and agitation on your minds; though we should judge of the safety of that state, only by what you every day tell us, that you do not know how to pray, and that you cannot support that aversion and that weariness which you feel in prayer;—I say, that on that account alone, the most innocent worldly life is a sinful and reprobate life, a mode of life to which there is no salvation; for salvation is promised only to prayer, salvation can only be effected through the aid obtained by prayer; salvation is granted only to perseverance in prayer: so that every mode of life which presents a real obstacle to prayer affords no hope of salvation. Now, that a life of dissipation and of amusement raises a real obstacle to the exercise of prayer,—that it excites in our hearts, in our imagination, and in our senses, an insurmountable aversion to prayer, a dissipation of mind incompatible with the spirit of prayer: you know it, you daily lament it, and you even make use of it as an excuse for the neglect of the duty; and from thence conclude that there is no salvation to the most innocent worldly life; since, in every case, if prayer is impossible, salvation is likewise impossible. The first cause of aversion to, and of wanderings in, prayer, is a life of lukewarmness and infidelity.

The second cause is, our being so little in the habit of prayer. We feel an aversion to the duty because we pray but seldom. For, in the first place, it is the frequent use of prayer alone, that will, by little and little, calm your spirit,—that will insensibly banish the images of the world and of vanity,—that will dissipate all those clouds which

occasion your aversion to and your wanderings in prayer. Secondly, you must continue to ask, urge, solicit, and importune, before you obtain the sweetness and the consolations of devotion, which are the fruit and the recompence of prayer. Thirdly, prayer must become familiar in order to afford pleasure. If you pray but seldom, the Lord will always be to you as a strange and as an unknown God, before whom you will experience a kind of awkwardness and constraint; and you will never experience those pleasing emotions, that sweet confidence, that holy liberty with Him, which familiarity alone can confer, and which constitutes all the pleasure of that Divine intercourse. God must be known to be loved. The world loses by being too closely examined: it is only the first view, and the surface of it, that is pleasing. Examine it more deeply, and you will find a mere void,—only vanity, grief, agitation, and misery. But with respect to the Lord, He must be known and tasted at leisure, saith the Prophet, to perceive all that he possesses that is amiable: *Gustate et videte quoniam suavis est Dominus*: “O taste and see that the Lord is good.” The more you know him, the more you will love him; the more you unite yourselves to him, the more you will become sensible that there is no true felicity upon the earth, except what is derived from knowing and loving him. “O taste and see that the Lord is good!”

It is only the practice of prayer which can render it agreeable to us. Besides, we see that most who complain of aversion to and wanderings in prayer, pray but seldom; they think that they have performed that essential duty, when they have only given to the Lord a few hasty moments of dissipation and of constraint: they have abandoned him at the first moment of disgust, without making any effort to subject their minds; and, instead of considering the invincible opposition which they feel to prayer, as a reason which renders it the more necessary to them, they regard it as a legitimate excuse which dispenses them from the duty.

But how, say you, shall we find time in the world to be

so long and frequent in prayer? You can find no time to pray, my dear hearer! But for what is time given to you, except to beg of God that he would forget your crimes, that he would regard you with compassion, and that he would one day put you in the number of his saints? You have no time to pray! Have you, then, no time to be a Christian? For a man, who never prays, is a man who has no God, no worship, no hope. You have no time to pray! But prayer is the beginning of every good; and if you do not pray, you have not yet performed a single work for eternal life. Ah! my brethren, are we at a loss for time to solicit earthly favours, to importune the sovereign, to beset those who are in place, to devote to pleasure or to sloth? What useless moments! What wearisome and burdensome days, through that sadness which idleness carries in its train! What time lost in vain ceremonies and in idle discourse, in endless games and in fruitless subjections, in running after a chimera which continually removes further from us! And they have, Great God, no time to entreat heaven of thee, to appease thine anger, and to obtain thine eternal mercies! What little account do we make of our salvation, O my God, when we have no time to entreat thy mercy to save us! And how much are we to be pitied when we find so many moments for the world, and yet cannot find a single one for eternity! Our being so little in the habit of prayer is the second cause of our aversion to, and of our wanderings in, prayer.

This reason, it is true, my brethren, is not so general but that we often see persons the most faithful to the obligation of prayer, continually experiencing that aversion and those wanderings of which I speak: but then those aversions proceed from the wisdom of God, who wishes to purify them, and who leads them by that way in order to accomplish His eternal designs of mercy towards them; this is the last reason: so that instead of being discouraged by that which prayer presents to them of a sad and disagreeable nature, they ought to persevere with greater fidelity,

than if the Lord shed upon them sensible and abundant consolations.

In the first place, because you ought to consider those aversions as the just punishment of your past infidelities. Is it not reasonable that God should compel you to expiate the criminal pleasures of your worldly life, by the disgusts and sorrows which attend piety? Weakness of constitution does not perhaps allow you to punish your former immoralities by corporal mortifications; is it not then just that God should substitute in their stead mental pains and afflictions? Would you wish him to translate you in a moment from the pleasures of the world to the pleasures of religion; from the flesh pots of Egypt to the milk and honey of the land of promise, without obliging you previously to feel the barrenness and the fatigues of the wilderness; and in a word, if I dare so to speak, that He should chastise the pleasures of sin only by the pleasures of virtue.

Secondly, you so long withheld yourselves from God, notwithstanding the most lively inspirations of His grace, which recalled you to the truth and to the light; you left Him so long to knock at the door of your hearts, before you gave Him possession; you so long disputed, combated, halted, and deferred, before you gave yourselves to Him; is it not just, therefore, that He should leave you for a time to solicit, before He gives Himself to you with all the consolations of His grace? The Lord delays and puts you off as a just punishment for your having thus acted towards Him.

But though these reasons were less solid, how can you tell whether God does not, by that means, design to render that exile and distance in which you live from Him more hateful, and to cause you to sigh more ardently after that eternal country, where the truth, no longer veiled, will always appear amiable to us, because we shall always see it as it is? How can you tell whether He does not, by that means, wish to excite in you compunction for

crimes, by making you every moment feel the opposition and the aversion which they have left in your hearts to truth and righteousness? Finally, how can you tell whether God does not, by these aversions, wish to perfect your purification from every thing human that still cleaves to your piety? Whether he does not design to establish your virtue upon the truth which is always the same, and not upon taste which is incessantly changing; upon those rules which are eternal, and not upon transient consolations; upon faith which always sacrifices visible things to invisible ones, and not upon the feelings which leave the world almost the same empire over our hearts as grace possesses over them. A piety derived wholly from taste does not proceed far, except it is supported and strengthened by truth. It is dangerous to make our fidelity to depend upon the sensible dispositions of a heart which is never for a moment the same, and upon which every object makes new impressions. The duties which please only when they comfort, do not long continue to please; and the virtue which has its source wholly in taste cannot long maintain itself, because it depends only upon ourselves.

For, after all, if you, in your prayers, seek only God, that He may conduct you either by aversions, or by consolations, provided He leads you to Himself, as it is the safest way for you, so it ought to appear preferable to every other. If you pray to obtain from Heaven only the supply of your wants and necessities, faith teaches you that prayer, even accompanied with these aversions and this barrenness, obtains the same grace, produces the same effects, and is as pleasing to God as that in which more sensible consolations are found: what do I say? it may even become more agreeable to the Lord, through His acceptance of the pains which you endure; faith teaches you, that you ought to be as faithful to the obligation of prayer, as though it afforded you sensible attractions. Otherwise, it would not be God which you sought, but yourselves—not eternal

blessings, but vain and transient consolations—not the remedy of faith, but the support of your self-love.

Hence those of you, whoever you are, that now listen to me, imitate the Canaanitish woman : be faithful to the duty of prayer ; and, in the performance of that duty, you will find assistance and facility in every other. If you are a sinner, pray : it is only by that means that the publican and the woman who had been a sinner, obtained the feelings of compunction and the grace of repentance ; and prayer is the only source and the only way of righteousness. If you are a righteous person, still pray : perseverance in the faith and in piety is promised only to prayer ; and it is only by that means that Job, David, and Tobit, persevered unto the end. If you live in the midst of sinners, and duty will not permit you to avoid the sight of their irregularities and examples, pray : the greater the perils, the more necessary does prayer become ; and the three youths in the midst of the flames, and Jonah in the belly of the sea-monster, found their safety only in prayer. If your birth, or your condition, attaches you to the court of kings, pray : Esther in the court of Ahasuerus, Daniel in that of Darius, the Prophets in the palace of the kings of Israel, owed their life and salvation only to prayer. If you live in retirement, pray : solitude itself becomes a snare, if a continual intercourse with the Lord does not defend us against ourselves ; and Judith, in the privacy of her house, and the widow Anna in the temple, and the Antonies in the bosom of the desert, found in prayer alone the fruit and the safety of their retreat. If you are established in the church to teach the people, pray : your prayers alone will constitute all the strength and all the success of your ministry ; and the Apostles converted the world, only because they reserved prayer and the preaching of the Gospel for their portion : “ But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.” (Acts vi. 4.) Finally, whosoever you are, whether

in prosperity or in indigence ; in joy or in affliction ; in trouble, or in peace ; in fervour, or in discouragement ; in the desire of, or in the ways of righteousness ; advanced in virtue, or still in the first steps of penitence, pray : prayer is the security of every state, the consolation of every pain, the duty belonging to every condition, the soul of piety, the support of faith, the great foundation of religion, and in itself the whole of religion. O my God ! shed on us this Spirit of grace and of supplication, which ought to be the most distinguishing mark of Thy church and the portion of a new people ; and purify our hearts and lips, to the end that we may offer to Thee pure praises, fervent sighs, and vows worthy of the eternal blessings which Thou hast so often promised to those who shall, in a suitable manner, ask them of Thee.

SERMON IX.

ON THE MISERABLE DEATH OF A SINNER, AND THE
HAPPY DEATH OF A RIGHTEOUS MAN.

REV. xiv. 13.

Blessed are the dead, who die in the Lord.

HUMAN passions always possess something surprising and incomprehensible. All men wish to live ; they regard death as the greatest misfortune : their passions all attach them to life ; and yet their passions incessantly hurry them towards the death which they so greatly dread ; and they seem to live only that they may hasten to die.

All flatter themselves that they shall die the death of the righteous : they hope for it, they desire it. Unable to promise themselves immortality upon the earth, they suppose that the passions, which actually defile and captivate them, will before that fatal moment, be extinguished. They consider the destiny of a sinner who dies in his sin, and in enmity with God, as dreadful ; and yet quietly, and without concern, prepare the same fate for themselves. That horrible termination of human life, a death in sin, alarms and terrifies them ; and yet they proceed, like madmen, dancing in the way which conducts them to it. We in vain declare that men die as they have lived : they wish to live as sinners, and yet to die as saints.

I do not therefore aim, my brethren, this day to undeceive you respecting so common and gross an illusion : we shall reserve that subject for another opportunity : but since the death of the righteous appears to you so very desirable, and that of the sinner so very dreadful, I wish to

set before you at present both the one and the other—to awaken your desire of the former, and your dread of the latter. As you will die in one of these two conditions, it is necessary to set the spectacle before you; in order that by thus placing before your eyes the dreadful delineation of the one, and the consoling picture of the other, you may previously decide which of the two awaits you, and take the steps which may render the decision favourable to you.

In the portraiture of the dying sinner, you will see whether the world, with all its pleasures and glory will at length conduct its partisans: in the description of the death of a saint, you will learn whither virtue, with all its pains, will lead its adherents. In the one you will see the world, with the eyes of a sinner on the point of death: and how vain and frivolous will it seem, and how different from what it now appears to you! In the other, you will behold virtue with the eyes of a dying saint, and how great and valuable will it appear to you!

In the one, you will perceive all the misery of a person who has lived in the forgetfulness of God: in the other, the happiness of one who has lived only to serve and please Him. In a word, the spectacle of the sinner's death will lead you to wish to live the life of the righteous; while the representation of the death of the righteous will inspire you with a sacred dread of the death of the sinner.—Let us pray, &c.

Part I.—It is in vain that we put the thought of death from us; every day brings us nearer to it. Youth fades away; years rapidly advance; and like streams running to the sea, which never return to their source, we haste to plunge into the abyss of eternity; in which, for ever overwhelmed, we shall no more return to the world to retrace our steps. *Et quasi aquæ dilabimur in terram, quæ revertuntur.*

I am aware that we daily speak of the shortness certainty of life. The death of our neighbours, c

jects, of our friends, and of our sovereigns ; often sudden, always unexpected, furnishes us with a thousand reflections on the frailty of man. We continually say that the world is nothing, that life is a dream, and that it is foolish in the extreme to be so greatly concerned for that which is to be of such short duration. But this is mere talk—not a fixed opinion : this is a language which we yield to custom, but which custom at the same time leads us to forget.

Now, my brethren, suppose yourselves in the condition the most agreeable to your wishes : let your days be prolonged, in imagination, even beyond your hopes ; I wish you to enjoy that pleasing illusion. But at length you must go the way of your fathers : you will see the day arrive, to which no other will succeed ; and that day will be to you the day of eternity ; happy if you die in the Lord, miserable if you die in your sins. One of these destinies awaits you : there will only be the right and the left, the sheep and the goats, in the final condition of all men. Allow me therefore to set your death-bed before you, and to exhibit the two-fold spectacle of that last hour, so terrible to the sinner, and so consoling to the saint.

I say terrible to the sinner, who, lulled asleep by the vain hopes of conversion, at length arrives at that last moment ; full of desires, but destitute of good works ; having scarcely any knowledge of God, or any thing to present to Him but his crimes, and the grief of having ended those days which he thought to be eternal. Now, my brethren, nothing is more dreadful than the situation of that unhappy creature in his last moments ; which way soever he directs his thoughts, whether he recal the past to his remembrance, or reflect on all that is taking place before him ; or penetrate into that terrible hereafter which he already approaches ; these objects, the only ones which will then engage and present themselves before him, offer nothing but what is overwhelming and hopeless, and capable of awakening in him the most dark and dismal ideas.

For, my brethren, what can the past present to a sinner

stretched upon his dying bed—to one who no longer counts upon life, and who reads in the countenances of all who surround him, the terrible intelligence that all is over with him? What does he behold in the numerous days which he has spent upon the earth? Alas!—only useless cares, momentary pleasures, and crimes which will never be blotted out.

Useless cares. The whole of his past life is, in the twinkling of an eye, presented to his view, and he discovers therein only a continual and useless restraint and agitation. He remembers all that he has endured for a world, which flies from him; for a fortune, which vanishes from his sight; for a vain reputation, which does not accompany him into the presence of God; for friends, whom he is losing; for sovereigns, who are about to forget him; for a name, which will only be written upon the dust of his grave. How piercing will be the regret of the miserable being to perceive that, after the labour of a whole life, he has done nothing for himself! How bitter the consideration, that he has done such great violence to himself, and is still no nearer advanced towards heaven; that he has thought himself too weak for the service of God, while he had strength and constancy to be a martyr to vanity, and to a perishing world. Ah! the sinner, overwhelmed and terrified at his blindness and error, and finding only an empty void in a life which the world had engrossed; perceiving, after the numerous years which he has passed, that he has not even begun to live; leaving histories filled with his actions, public monuments, loaded with the events of his life, the world full of his fame, yet leaving nothing behind him which deserves to be written in the book of eternity, and which will follow him into the presence of God: it is then that he begins, but too late, to hold a language to himself, to which we have often listened:—
 “Have I then lived only to vanity? O that I had done as much for God, as I have done for my sovereign? Alas! Were so much agitation and solicitude necessary to effect

my ruin? Why did I not, at least, receive my consolation in this world! I should then have enjoyed the present, the moment which now escapes me, and all would not have been lost. But my life has been full of agitations, subjections, fatigues and restraints; all to prepare myself for eternal misery. What folly to have suffered more to ruin, than was necessary to be endured, in order to save myself; and to have regarded the life of the good, as dull and insupportable; since they have performed nothing so difficult for God, by an hundred fold, as I have done for the world, which is nothing, and from which consequently I have nothing to expect!" *Ambulavimus viam difficiles: erravimus à viâ veritatis* (Wis. v. 6, 7). 'We have walked in difficult ways: we have erred from the way of truth.'

Then, my brethren, your whole life will be presented to your view, in a very different light from that in which it now appears. You now reckon the services which you render to the state, the places which you fill, the actions in which you have distinguished yourselves, the wounds which still testify to your valour, the number of campaigns that you have made, the authority attached to your commands; these all appear to you as realities. The public applauses which accompany them, the rewards which follow them, the fame which publishes them, the distinctions which are attached to them; these all recal your past days to remembrance, as days filled up and rendered notable by memorable actions, and by events worthy to be handed down to posterity. You even distinguish yourselves in your own opinion from those idle persons of your rank, who have always led an obscure, idle, and useless life; and dishonoured their names by the lazy and effeminate manners, which have left them grovelling in the dust. But on a death-bed, in that last moment, in which the world will fly from you, and eternity approach, your eyes will be opened; the scene will change; the illusion which magnifies these objects, will be dissipated: you will behold

every thing in its true light; and all which appeared to you so great, and which you performed only for the world, for glory, for fortune, will appear to you as no longer any thing: *Aperiet oculos suos*, saith Job, *et nihil inveniet*. You will find nothing real in your past life, except what you did for God; nothing worthy of praise, except works of faith and piety; nothing great, but what will be worthy of eternity: and a cup of cold water given in the name of Jesus Christ, a single tear shed in his presence, and the least sufferings endured for his sake, will appear to you more precious and valuable than all the wonders which the world admires, and which are about to perish with the world.

The dying sinner will find not only lost labour in his past life, but also the remembrance of his pleasures; and that very recollection will confound and overwhelm him;—pleasures which lasted but a moment. He perceives that he has sacrificed his soul and eternity for a fleeting moment of pleasure and intoxication. Alas! life appeared to him too long to be wholly consecrated to God: he dared not, too soon, espouse the side of virtue, lest he should not be able to endure its *ennui*, its languors, and its consequences: he regards the years still before him, as an immense space through which he must pass, bearing his cross, living in a state of separation from the world, and in the practice of Christian duties: that single thought continually suspended every good desire; and he deferred his return to God to the last stage of life, as that in which perseverance would be the most certain. How surprised is he in his last hour to find, that what appeared to him so long has lasted but a moment; that his infancy and age were so near to each other, that they could scarcely be said to form more than a single day; and that there was but a single step from his mother's womb to the tomb! Nor is even this the most bitter thing which he finds in the remembrance of his pleasures: they have vanished as a dream; but he, who formerly gloried in them, is now covered with shame and confusion. How many shameful passions,

weaknesses, and debaucheries ! He, who had valued himself on his reason, elevation, and pride before men, now finds himself, O my God ! the most weak and contemptible of sinners ! A life, perhaps, prudent in appearance, but sunk in infamous sensualities and puerile passions ! A life, perhaps, glorious before men ; but in the sight of God the most shameful, and worthy of contempt and disgrace ! A life which success had perhaps always accompanied ; but which in private was the most foolish, frivolous, and devoid of reflection and wisdom ! Finally, pleasures which have been the source of all his griefs ; which have poisoned all the comforts of his life, which have converted his best days into days of madness and sorrow ; pleasures which he was always obliged to purchase at a high price, and of which he scarcely ever tasted any thing but their disgust and bitterness : this is what this vain felicity is reduced to. It was his passion which caused him to pass a miserable life : he never possessed tranquillity, except in those moments in which his heart was freed from their influence. ‘ My days of pleasure have fled,’ saith the sinner to himself, ‘ but in a very different manner from those of Job ; those days which constituted all the misery of my life, which disturbed my repose, and converted the quietness of the night into gloomy and disquieting thoughts : *Dies mei transierunt, cogitationes meæ dissipatæ sunt, torquentes cor meum.* And yet, great God, thou wilt still punish the griefs and inquietudes of my miserable life ! Thou writest against me in the book of thy indignation, all the guilt of my sinful passions ; and in retribution to those pleasures, which always constituted my wretchedness, thou appointest a misery without end, and beyond degree ! *Scribis contra me amaritudines, et consumere me vis peccatis adolescentiæ meæ !*’ (Job xiii. 26.)

And the expiring sinner still finds, in the remembrance of the past, crimes which will remain for ever : the weakness of childhood, the irregularities of youth, the passions and scandals of more advanced years, (what do I know ?)

perhaps, in addition, the shameful disorders of a licentious old age. Ah! my brethren, in a time of health we only see the surface of our consciences; we only retain a vague and confused remembrance of our life; we only discern those passions which actually lead us into bondage. A habit retained through life only strikes us as a single crime. But on a death-bed, the clouds which had been spread over the conscience of the sinner are dispelled; the more closely he examines his heart, the more defilement he discovers; the more he dives into this abyss, the more monstrous excesses present themselves to his view. He is lost in the chaos: he knows not where to begin to unravel it: a whole life would be necessary to him;—Alas! time rapidly passes away: only a few moments remain to him to hurry over a confession for which the greatest leisure would scarcely have sufficed, and that only a moment before the dreadful decision of a righteous God! Alas! we often complain that our memories are treacherous, that we forget every thing: a confessor must supply our inattention, and aid us to judge and know ourselves. But in that last moment the dying sinner will not require that assistance. While he was in health, God, in righteous judgment, gave him up to the grossest darkness: He will then enlighten him in his wrath. Every thing which surrounds his death-bed revives in his recollection some new crimes;—the servants whom he stumbled, the children whom he neglected, the wife whom he grieved by his irregularities; the ministers of the church whom he despised, the criminal images of his sinful passions, still portrayed upon the walls of his house; the blessings which he abused, the luxury which still surrounds him, and for which the poor and his creditors have suffered; the sumptuousness of the buildings, which he erected at the expense of the widow, and the orphan, and perhaps of the public misery;—every thing, heaven and earth, saith Job, arise against him, and set before him the history of his sinful passions and crimes.

Revelabunt cali iniquitatem ejus, et terra consurget adversus eum (Job xx. 27).

Thus the remembrance of the past will constitute the most terrible condition of the dying sinner, because he therein discovers only sufferings which he endured in vain, pleasures which lasted but a moment, and crimes which will remain for ever.

And every thing which takes place before his eyes is equally grievous to this miserable creature ; the sudden alarms which seize him, the separations to which he is then called, and the changes which then take place.

His sudden alarms. He always flattered himself that the day of the Lord would not take him by surprise. All that he heard from Christian pulpits on the subject, did not prevent his indulging the hope that he should set his conscience in order before that awful moment : but, lo ! it arrives, while he is still burdened with his crimes ; and before he has made any preparation for it ; or taken a single step to appease the Almighty ; lo ! it arrives ; and he is about to be judged, before he has even given it a serious thought.

His sudden alarms. God strikes him in the midst of his criminal passions, at a time when the thought of death was the farthest from his mind ; when he had just attained certain places which he had till then most eagerly desired ; and when, like the fool in the Gospel, he said to his soul, Take thine ease, and enjoy in peace the fruit of thy labour. In that very moment, the justice of God surprises him ; and in the twinkling of an eye are his life and his hopes extinguished.

His sudden alarms. He is on the point of death ; God so permits it, that no one should dare to inform him that he must resign every hope of life. His neighbours flatter him : his friends suffer him to deceive himself : they already secretly bewail him as dead ; and yet they encourage him with the hopes of life : they deceive him, in order that he

may deceive himself. The Scripture must be fulfilled; the sinner must be unexpectedly seized by the king of terrors: Thou hast so predicted it, O my God! And thou art true to thy word.

His *sudden alarms*. Given over by the physician, left to his calamity and grief, he cannot yet be convinced that he is dying: he still flatters himself and cherishes hope: the justice of God still leaves him a measure of reason, that he may employ it to his own deception. It is evident from his terrors, his amazement, his inquietudes, that he is not yet aware that he is dying: he torments himself, and is agitated, as though he could escape the king of terrors; and his distress arises merely from the fear of losing his life, and not from the grief of having passed it amiss. The blinded sinner must needs remain so, even to the end, that his death may resemble his life.

Finally, his *sudden alarms*. He then perceives that the world has always deceived him; that it has continually led him from illusion to illusion, and from hope to hope; that things never occurred as he had promised himself, and that he has always been the dupe of his own mistakes. He cannot conceive that he should have been so constantly under a delusion; that he should have persisted, during so many years, to sacrifice himself for a world, and for sovereigns which never recompensed him but with empty promises; and that his whole life has consisted of an insane attachment to the world, and of the world's indifference to him. But that which overwhelms him is this, that the mistake is irremediable; that we can die but *once*, and that, after having unhappily concluded our course, we can no more return to retrace our steps, and to pursue a different route. Thou art just, O my God, and thou wilt have the sinner, even now, to decide against himself, that thou mayest condemn him out of his own mouth.

The *sudden alarms* of the dying sinner are therefore overwhelming; and the separations to which he is called, in that last moment, are not less so to him. The greater

his attachment to the world, to life, to every creature, the greater his grief when he must relinquish them : as the number of the bonds which must be severed, are the wounds which distress him ; as the number of these separations are the deaths that he endures.

A *separation* from the property which he had, with such long and painful solicitude, accumulated, perhaps by methods that rendered his salvation very doubtful ; which he obstinately retained, notwithstanding the accusations of his conscience ; which he had cruelly withheld from the necessities of his brethren : yet they escape from him ; that accumulation of riches vanishes like dust before his eyes : he only carries away with him the love of riches, the regret of losing them, and the guilt by which he acquired them.

A *separation* from all the magnificence which surrounds him ; from his stately palaces in which he supposed he had built himself an asylum from death ; from his elegant and splendid furniture, of which nothing remains to him but the winding sheet in which he is about to be enveloped ; from that appearance of opulence in which he continually lived ; every thing flies from him, every thing forsakes him. He begins to view himself, as he ought always to have done, as a stranger in the midst of his palaces ; as a poor person no longer possessed of any thing ; as an unhappy being about to be stripped of every thing that he possesses, the sight of which he is permitted to enjoy, for a time, only to increase his regret and his punishment.

A *separation* from his employments and honours, which he is about to relinquish, perhaps, to a rival ; which he had obtained through numerous perils, labours, and meanneesses, and which he had enjoyed with arrogance. On his death-bed, he is stripped of every mark of distinction ; and he retains, of all his numerous titles, only that of a sinner, which he then, alas ! too late, takes to himself. He would be content in that last moment with the meanest state ; he would accept the most obscure and grovelling

condition as a favour, if it might prolong his existence: he envies the destiny of the slaves whom he leaves upon the earth; he marches to death, with rapid strides, while he continues to turn his eyes with regret towards life.

A *separation* from his body, to which alone he had lived, and with which he had contracted, through favouring his sinful passions, such lively and intimate bonds. He perceives that his house of clay is decaying: he feels himself dying, each sense gradually fails him: he is retained in life only by a languishing frame, by grievous pains which his calamities occasion, and by the excessive love which attaches him to it, and which becomes more lively by degrees as he approaches the time of separation.

A *separation* from his neighbours and friends, whom he beholds around his bed; and whose tears and distress complete his attachment, and cause him more painfully to feel the affliction of leaving them.

A *separation* from the world, in which he filled so many offices; in which he had established, exalted, and spread himself, as though it were to be his eternal abode: from the world, without which he could never exist; in which he was always one of the principal actors; in the events of which he had taken so great a share; in which he appeared with so much satisfaction and with so many talents calculated to please. His body is about to leave the world; but all his affections still cling to it: the world dies to him; but he, though dying, dies not to the world.

Finally, a *separation* from every creature. Every thing is annihilated around him: he stretches out his hands to every surrounding object, as if to retain it; but he only grasps a phantom, a dissipating vapour that leaves nothing in his hands: *Et nihil invenerunt omnes viri divitiarum in manibus suis.* (Psal. lxxv. 6.) It is then that God appears great in the eyes of the dying sinner. It is in that terrible moment that the whole world dissolves and vanishes from before his eyes: nothing remains to him but God, who filleth all things, who neither passes away nor

changes. He formerly complained, with an ironical and impious tone, that it was difficult to feel any lively regard for a God who was invisible; and not to be attached to the creatures which we saw, and which affected all our senses. Ah! in that last moment he will perceive none but God; the Invisible will become visible: his senses, already extinguished, reject every sensible object; every thing around him vanishes; and God occupies the place of all those illusions which deluded him during his life.

Hence every thing changes to the unhappy being; and this forms, with his *sudden alarms* and *separations*, the last bitter ingredient in the cup of death.

A *change* takes place in his credit and authority. Since the world can no longer expect any thing from him, it begins no longer to depend upon him: his pretended friends retire; his creatures begin already to seek other protection and masters; even his slaves are busy in securing a convenient fortune for themselves after his decease; scarcely any remain around him to receive his dying sighs. All leave him, all retire from him: he no longer beholds around him numerous and eager flatterers; they run in crowds to the person already designed to succeed him, "while he," saith Job, "left alone upon the bed of languishing, is no longer surrounded, except with the terrors of death;" he already enters into the dreadful solitude which is prepared for him in the tomb, and he makes bitter reflections upon the inconstancy of the world, and the little dependence which can be placed upon men. *Affligetur relictus in tabernaculo suo.*

A *change* takes place in the public esteem with which he had been so flattered and intoxicated. Alas! the world, which had so much extolled him, has already forgotten him. The changes which his death is about to occasion upon the stage will for some days awaken public discourse; but that short period being elapsed, he will sink into insignificance and forgetfulness: it will scarcely be recollected that he lived: all will, probably, be full of the wou-

derful qualities of his successor, whom they will exalt upon the ruins of his reputation and memory. He already perceives that forgetfulness;—that he has only to die, and the void will be soon filled up, and no vestige of him will remain in the world; while the good alone, who had seen him surrounded with so much glory, will say to themselves, Where is he? What are become of the applauses which his power attracted? This is what the world leads to, and this is all that is gained by serving it. *Et qui eum viderant, dicent: Ubi est.* (Job xx. 7.)

A *change* takes place in his body. That flesh which he had so much indulged and idolized; that vain beauty which had attracted so much regard, and been the means of corrupting such numbers, is become only a spectacle of horror, the sight of which we can scarcely endure: it is a mere carcase, which we already dread to approach. The unhappy creature who has, alas! awakened so many sinful desires is abandoned. His friends, his neighbours, and even his slaves flee from him and are scattered: they dare not approach him, but with precaution; they perform for him none but acts of decency and necessity: he endures himself with pain, and can regard himself only with horror. I, who formerly attracted every attention, says he with Job, now call to my servants and they refuse to approach me; and even my breath is become infectious and fatal to my children and neighbours. *Servum meum vocavi, et non respondit. . . . Halitum meum exhorruit uxor mea, et orabam filios uteri mei.*

Finally, a *change* takes place in every thing which surrounds him. His eyes seek something to fix upon, and they can only discover the mournful images of death. But the remembrance of the past and the spectacle of the present are nothing to the dying sinner; he would not be so miserable, if he could confine all his troubles to these. It is the thought of the future, which throws him into a paroxysm of horror and despair: that *hereafter*, that region of darkness, into which he is about to enter, accom-

panied only by his conscience: that *hereafter*, that unknown land from which no mortal has returned, where he neither knows what he shall find nor what is prepared for him: that *hereafter*, that immense abyss, in the contemplation of which his spirit is lost and confounded, and in which he is about to be plunged, uncertain of his destiny: that *hereafter*, that tomb, that abode of horror, in which he is about to take his place with the ashes of his ancestors: that *hereafter*, that awful eternity, of which he cannot endure the first glance: finally, that *hereafter*, that dreadful judgment-seat, where he is about to appear before an offended God, to give an account of a life spent wholly in wickedness. Ah! while he sees that terrible futurity only at a distance, he awfully glories in disbelieving it: he incessantly inquires with a tone of blasphemy and derision, Who is returned thence? He laughs at vulgar fears, he boasts of his firmness and courage. But as soon as he is stricken of God—as death approaches—as the gates of eternity open to his view, and he, at length, draws near to that terrible hereafter to which he had so often bid defiance. Ah! he then becomes weak, he trembles, and is overwhelmed with tears; he raises his suppliant hands to heaven, or he is melancholy—silent—agitated—inwardly revolving the most terrible and appalling thoughts, and expecting from the Almighty no more alleviation from his tears and lamentations, than from his rage and despair.

Yes, my brethren, the miserable creature who lulled himself to sleep in his irregularities; who always flattered himself that one pious moment, one single expression of compunction at the hour of death, would be sufficient to appease the wrath of God, now despairs of his favour. We in vain speak to him of his everlasting mercy; he feels his extreme unworthiness: the minister of religion endeavours in vain to remove his fears, by setting before him the Divine clemency; those promises no longer affect him, because he is aware that the charity of the church, which never despairs of the salvation of her children,

does not alter the formidable sentence of Divine justice. In vain does he promise him the pardon of his sins: a secret and terrible voice informs him, that there is no salvation for the infidel; and that he must not rely upon the hopes which are offered to his misery, but are not founded upon the truth. He in vain exhorts him to have recourse to the last remedies which religion offers to the dying: he regards them as desperate remedies, which are hazarded when hope no longer exists; and which are rather afforded for the consolation of the living, than for the benefit of the dying. The servants of Christ are called to support him in his last moments; but he can only secretly envy their condition and detest the misery of his own. They put the words of Scripture, and the sentiments of a royal penitent into his lips: but he is sensible that his heart disavows those sacred expressions; and that the words which arise from an ardent love and a sincere compunction, do not suit a sinner, surprised like him, in the midst of his transgressions. His friends and neighbours are summoned around his bed to collect his dying sighs; but he turns away his eyes, because he finds in them the remembrance of his crimes. The minister of religion presents him a dying God; and that consoling object, so capable of exciting his confidence, secretly reproaches him with his ingratitude and continual abuse of his grace. Death rapidly approaches; the priest endeavours to sustain, with the prayers appointed for the dying, the feeble remains of life which still animate him. *Proficiscere, anima Christiana: "Depart, Christian soul:"* he does not say to him, Prince, great one of the world, depart. During his life public monuments could scarcely suffice to express his name and enumerate his pompous titles: in his last moments he is addressed only by the title that he received at his baptism, the only one of which he took no account, and yet the only one which must remain with him for ever: "*Depart, Christian soul.*" Alas! he had lived as though his body constituted his whole being: he had even

attempted to persuade himself that his soul was nothing; that man consisted only of flesh and blood, and that every thing would expire with him; and he has just been told, that his body is mere clay about to be dissolved; and that it is his soul which is the whole of his immortal being, that image of the Divinity, that intelligence which is capable of knowing and loving him; which is about to leave its terrestrial abode, and to appear before the awful tribunal. "*Depart, Christian soul:*" you have considered the earth as your country; but it was only the place of your pilgrimage, which you must now leave: the church thought to announce glad tidings to you, the end of your exile, the termination of your misery, by announcing to you the dissolution of your mortal body; but, alas! it only announces to you sad and alarming intelligence—the beginning of your misery and pains. "*Depart then, Christian soul,*" marked with the seal of salvation which you have effaced; purchased with the blood of Jesus Christ, which you have trampled under your feet; washed by the grace of regeneration, which you have a thousand times defiled; enlightened by revelation, which you have constantly rejected! loaded with the mercies of God, which you have always impiously profaned. "*Depart, Christian soul:*" go and bear before Jesus Christ that august title which ought to have been the glorious sign of your salvation, and which is about to become the greatest of your crimes. "*Depart, Christian soul.*"

Then the dying sinner, finding in the remembrance of the *past* only the regrets which overwhelm him; in all which passes before his eyes, only the images which afflict him; in the thought of the *future*, only the horrors which terrify him: no longer knowing to whom to have recourse; not to the creatures, which escape him, nor to the world, which is passing away; not to men, who are incapable of delivering him from death, nor to the righteous God, whom he regards as an avowed enemy, and from whom he can expect no indulgence: he is full of

tossings amidst the horrors of his own mind ; he torments himself, he endeavours to flee from the death which seizes him, or at least to flee from himself : there glares from his dying eyes an indescribable melancholy and wildness, which express the horrors of his mind : from the excess of his grief he utters words interrupted with groans, which being only half understood, it is uncertain, whether they proceed from despair, or from godly sorrow ; he casts such terrific looks towards a crucified God, as leave it doubtful whether they are expressive of fear or of hope ; of hatred or of love : he falls into sudden convulsions, which leave us ignorant whether they be occasioned by the dissolution of the body, or by the soul's perception of its approaching Judge : he utters dismal groans ; and we know not whether they are extorted by the remembrance of his crimes, or by the grief of leaving the present life. Finally, in the midst of these painful efforts, his eyes fix—his features change—his countenance is disfigured—his livid lips half unclosed—his spirit shrinks with horror—his whole frame is convulsed—and by this last struggle, the unhappy spirit is torn reluctantly from its tabernacle of clay—falls into the hands of God—finds itself alone at the foot of the dread tribunal.

My brethren, it is in this manner those persons die, who, during their life, have forgotten God ; and thus will *you* die, if your crimes accompany you to your expiring moment. Every thing will change in your eyes, while *you* alone will remain the same. You will die ; and you will die *sinners*, as you have lived ; and your death will resemble your life. Prevent this misery by living the life of the righteous ; and your death, resembling theirs, will be attended only with joy, pleasure, and consolation. This is what we are about to set forth in the following part of this discourse.

Part II.—I know that death always possesses something terrible even to the most righteous. They conti-

nally fear the impenetrable secrets of the Divine judgments; their ignorance of their own hearts, in which they always suspect secret faults, known only to God; the liveliness of their faith and love, which magnifies the smallest errors in their eyes; finally, the mere dissolution of their terrestrial body, and the natural horror which we feel of the grave; these always leave to death something indescribably dreadful to nature, which causes even the most righteous, as saith St. Paul, to desire to be clothed with the immortality which is promised to them, but without being stripped of the mortality which surrounds them.

It is however equally true, that grace overcomes this natural dread of death; and that (as saith St. Bernard), whether they in that moment remember the past, whether they consider what takes place before their eyes, or whether they turn towards the future: they find in the remembrance of the *past*, the termination of their pains; *requies de labore*: in all that *passes before their eyes*, a novelty which fills them with holy joy; *gaudium de novitate*: in the thought of the *future*, the assurance of an eternity which fills them with sacred transports; *securitas de æternitate*: so that the same circumstances which constitute the despair of the dying sinner, then become an abundant source of consolation to the faithful soul.

I say, if they recal the past. And here, my brethren, represent to yourselves a believer on his death-bed, who has for a long time been preparing for that last moment, who has, by the practice of Christian duties, been laying up a treasure of righteousness that he may not appear empty before his Judge, and who lived a life of faith that he might die in peace, and in the consolation of hope: represent to yourselves such a person at length arrived at that last hour, which he had continually kept in view, and to which he constantly referred all his cares, his privations, his mortifications, and the events of his mortal existence. Nothing, I say, is more consoling to him than the remembrance of the past, his sufferings, his mortifi-

cations, his self-denial, and all the different conditions he has experienced : *Requies de labore*.

Yes, my brethren, to suffer for God *now* seems terrible to you. The slightest violence which religion demands *now* overwhelms you with trouble ; even a fast dismays and discourages you : the near approach of Lent throws you into sadness and *ennui* : you regard those as miserable who bear the yoke of Jesus Christ, and who renounce the world and its pleasures to please him.

But, on a death-bed, the most consoling thought to a believer is the remembrance of the sufferings which he has endured for God. He then comprehends the merit of penitence, and how great the madness of men in refusing to the will of God a moment of self-denial, which is to be repaid with an infinite and eternal felicity. For that which then consoles him is this,—he has sacrificed only momentary pleasures, which would have left to him only confusion and shame ; that all which he has suffered for the world would be lost to him in that last moment ; while all that he had endured for God, a tear, a single act of self-denial, a sinful inclination mortified, a lively thought suppressed, or a vain satisfaction sacrificed, would never be forgotten, but would endure as long as God himself. That which consoles him is this, that of all mortal joys and pleasures, alas ! on a death-bed nothing more remains to the sinner, who continually enjoyed them, than to the righteous soul that always refrained from them ;—that, to both the one and the other, those pleasures are equally passed away ; while one will eternally bear the guilt of having given himself up to them ; and the other the glory of having been able to subdue the inclination to them.

This is what the past presents to a believer on a death-bed. Violences and afflictions which were of short duration, and for which he is about to be eternally consoled ; the time of danger and temptation passed ; the attacks that the world made upon his faith, at length terminated ; the perils in which his innocence had been exposed to such

imminent risk, at length out of sight; the temptations by which his virtue was so nearly shipwrecked, at length removed far away; the perpetual conflicts which he had to sustain with his passions, at length terminated; the obstacles which flesh and blood continually opposed to his piety, finally annihilated: *Requies de labore*. When we enter the haven, how sweet is it to recollect the storms and tempests through which we have been preserved! When brought off victors from the course, how do we delight to retrace our steps, and to review the most remarkable places in our race by the labours, obstacles, and difficulties which rendered them celebrated! *Requies de labore*. The righteous man then appears, like another Moses dying upon the holy mountain, on which the Lord had pointed out his tomb: *Ascende in montem, et morere*: "Go up to the mountain, and die:"—who, before he expired, turned his head from the top of that sacred place, and cast his eyes over the country, nations, and kingdoms, through which he had passed, and which he had left behind him; reviewing the innumerable perils which he had escaped; the numerous nations he had conquered; the fatigues of the wilderness; the ambushes of Midian; the murmurs and the calumnies of his brethren; the rocks rent; the difficulties of the way surmounted; the dangers of Egypt escaped; the waters of the Red Sea safely passed; hunger, thirst, and weariness sustained, and approaching the happy termination of so many labours, and at length saluting from afar the country promised to his fathers, he sings a song of thanksgiving; dies transported, both from the remembrance of the many dangers he has escaped, and from the view of the place of repose of which the Lord gives him a distant prospect; and, regarding the sacred mountain on which he is about to expire, as the recompence of his labours, and the happy termination of his course: *Requies de labore*.

Not but that the remembrance of the past, by bringing to the recollection of the dying saint, the conflicts and

perils of his past life, likewise recalls to his mind his infidelities and falls: but they are falls which have been expiated by penitential groans; happy falls, through the renewed fervour and faithfulness with which they were always succeeded; falls which remind him of the mercies of God towards his soul, which caused his crimes to promote his repentance,—his passions, his conversion,—and his falls, his salvation. Ah! the sorrow which he feels for his faults in that last moment, is only a consolatory and soothing sorrow; the tears which that recollection still draws from him are only tears of joy and gratitude. The former mercies of God towards him inspire him with confidence, and encourage him to expect new ones: all the past dealings of God with him serve to strengthen him, and seem a guarantee for the future. He no longer considers Him, as in the days of his mourning and repentance, under the character of a terrible Judge whom he had insulted, and whom it was necessary to appease; but as the Father of mercy, and the God of all comfort, who is about to receive him to his bosom, and to console him after his sorrows.

Arise, faithful soul, saith its Lord and its God to it then in secret: *Elevare, consurge, Jerusalem*. You who have drank all the bitterness of my cup, forget at length your past tears and afflictions: *Quæ bibisti calicem usque ad fundum*. The period of your sufferings and tears is at length terminated: *Non adjicies ut bibas illum ultra*. (Isaiah li. 17.) Divest thyself then, O daughter of Jerusalem, of thy mourning and sorrowful garments, with which thou hast hitherto been clothed: leave there the sad spoils of thy mortality: put on thy glorious and magnificent apparel: enter into the joy of thy Lord, O holy city, which I have chosen as my abode for ever: *Induere vestimentis gloriæ tuæ, Jerusalem, civitas sancti*. (Isaiah lii. 1.) Break at length the chains of thy captivity: Depart out of the midst of Babylon, in which thou hast so long groaned under the severity and hardships of thy exile:

Solve vincula colli tui, captiva filia Sion. The uncircumcised shall no more dwell in the midst of thee; their offences shall no longer wound thy faith: it is at length time for me to repossess that which belongs to me—to re-enter into my inheritance—to withdraw thee from the midst of a world to which thou dost not belong, and which was not worthy of thee, and that I should re-unite thee to the church in heaven, of which thou wast a pure and immortal part: *Non adjiciet ultra, ut pertranseat per te incircumcisus et immundus.* The first source of consolation to a righteous person on his death-bed, is the remembrance of the past: *Requies de labore.*

So every thing that takes place before his eyes—the world, which passes away; the creatures, which disappear; the vain phantoms, that vanish;—all these new and various changes are likewise the source of a thousand additional consolations to him: *Gaudium de novitate.*

Indeed we have just seen that the things which constitute the despair of the dying sinner, when he reflects upon what takes place before his eyes, are his *sudden alarm*, his *separations*, his *changes*; and these are precisely the very things that console a faithful soul in that last moment. Nothing surprises it; it is separated from nothing that it values; nothing changes in its view.

Nothing surprises him. Ah! the day of the Lord does not alarm him: he expected and desired it. The thoughts of that last hour entered into all his actions and projects; regulated all his desires, and encouraged him in all his conduct. Every hour, every moment appeared to him as the one in which the righteous Judge was about to require that strict account, in which even our very righteousness will be examined. It is in this manner that he lived in continual preparation for that last hour: it is thus that he dies tranquil, consoled; free from sudden alarm, without fear, and in peace with God; perceiving death no nearer than it had always appeared to him; dying no more than he had died daily; and finding nothing different between

the day of his death, and the ordinary days of his mortal existence.

Besides, that which occasions the sudden alarm and despair of the sinner on his death-bed, is the perception that the world, in which he had placed his confidence, is nothing—a mere dream, which vanishes and escapes from him. But the believer, in that last moment, beholds the world with the same eyes with which he had always beheld it—as a passing shadow—as a meteor which deceives only at a distance, but that possesses nothing real or substantial when viewed near. He derives a sacred joy, from having always judged correctly respecting the world, and from having been under no mistake—from not having been attached to that which was about to escape him in a moment; and from having placed his confidence only in God, who eternally exists to recompense all who hope in Him. How sweet is it to a believer, at such a time, to be able to say to himself, ‘I have chosen the good part; I had sufficient cause to attach myself to God, since He alone was to be left to me. My choice was considered a folly: the world derided me; and it thought me whimsical and singular in not conforming to it. This last moment is at length a complete reply to it. It is death which decides who were wise and who were foolish, and whether the man of the world or the believer had reason on his side.’

It is thus that a righteous man contemplates the world, and all its glory, on a death-bed. Besides, when the ministers of the church come to discourse with him concerning God, and the nothingness of all human things; those sacred truths, so new to the sinner in his last moments, are familiar to him; they are sentiments which he previously maintained. Those consoling truths then engage his sweetest attention: he meditates upon them; he tastes them; he draws them again from his bosom, where they had always existed, to set them afresh before his eyes. The minister of Christ does not address to him a new and strange language: it is the language of his heart, the sen-

timents which he held during life. Nothing then so much consoles him as to listen to discourses respecting the God whom he always loved—the eternal blessings which he always desired—the felicity of another life, after which he continually sighed—and the nothingness of the world, which he always despised. All other subjects become insupportable to him. He can only listen to the mercies of God, the God of his fathers; and he regrets the moments which he must still employ to set his house in order, and to dispose of the inheritance of his ancestors. Great God, what light! what peace! what happy transports! what soul exercises of love, joy, confidence, and thanksgiving, then arise in the believer's mind! His faith is revived; his love is inflamed; his fervour is increased; his compassion is excited. As the outward man decays, the inward man is perfected. As his house of clay falls, his soul is elevated and purified. As his body languishes, his spirit becomes free and is renewed; like a flame which rises and becomes brighter by degrees as it disengages itself from the remains of matter which retain it, and as the body to which it is united is consumed and dissipated.

Ah! discourses respecting God fatigue the sinner on his death-bed: they increase his affliction—his head is affected—his repose is disturbed. We must accommodate ourselves to his weakness by letting fall only a few words to the purpose—we must be careful not to weary him by their length—we must choose the moment to speak to him of the God whom he has never known, and by whom he is about to be judged. It is necessary to have recourse even to artifice in the work of love, and almost to deceive him before we can awaken in him any regard to his salvation. The ministers of the church but seldom approach him, because they perceive that they are unwelcome: they are shunned as mournful and ill-boding prophets. All conversation relating to salvation is quickly broken off, as the mention of death and of gloomy subjects fatigues him: every one seeks only to alleviate his calamity by the recital

of the affairs and vanities of the world, which had occupied him during his life. Great God ! and thou sufferest the unhappy creature to retain, even till death, this aversion to the truth—to be taken up with images of the world even to his last moment, and that we should fear to speak to him of the God whom he always dreaded to know and to serve:

But let us not lose sight of the faithful soul : nothing surprises him on his death-bed, nor is he separated from any thing that is dear to him, or that he regrets. For, my brethren, what can death take from him which should occasion him tears or regret ?—The world ? No ! he always lived in it as a stranger ; he found in it only offences which wounded his faith, snares which shook his innocence, ceremonies which incommoded him, and obligations that divided his heart, in spite of himself, between heaven and earth. We never regret the loss of what we have never loved.—From his property and riches ? No ! his treasure was in heaven ; his property had been devoted to the poor : he does not lose it ; he is only going to recover it in the bosom of God. From his titles and dignities ? No ! they are a yoke which he shakes off : the only title which was dear to him was that which he received at the sacred font ; which he must bear before God, and which gives him a claim to eternal blessings.—From his neighbours and friends ? No ! he knows that he precedes them but a moment—that death does not separate those whom love has united upon the earth, and that they shall speedily be re-united in the bosom of God, and form, with him, but one church and people, to enjoy the pleasures of an immortal society.—From his children ? He leaves them God as their Father, his example and instructions as their inheritance, his prayers and benedictions as the last consolation ; and like David, asking for his son Solomon, not temporal prosperity, but a perfect heart, the love of the Divine law, and the fear of the God of his father : *Salomoni quoque filio meo da cor perfectum*.—From his body ? Yes ! from that body

which he had continually chastened and crucified—which he regarded as his enemy—which still caused him to rely upon flesh and sense—which made him sink under so many humiliating necessities; from that house of clay which retained him in captivity—which prolonged the days of his exile and servitude, and hindered his re-union with Jesus Christ. Ah! like Paul, he desires his dissolution. It is a foreign garment from which he is disencumbered: it is a wall of separation from his God, that is decaying, and which leaves him free, and in a capacity to soar aloft and take his flight towards the everlasting mountains. So that death separates him from nothing, because faith had already separated him from every thing.

I do not add that the changes which take place on a death-bed, so terrible to the sinner, make no alteration in the faithful soul. His reason is extinguished, it is true; but he had for a long time brought it into subjection to the yoke of faith, and extinguished his vain knowledge by the knowledge of God and of the depth of the Divine mysteries. His dying eyes become obscure, and are closed to every visible object; but he had for a long time looked only upon those objects that were invisible. His tongue cleaves to the roof of his mouth; but he had long since set a watch over it, and meditated in silence on the mercies of the God of his fathers. All his faculties become dull, and lose their natural use; but he had long since forbidden their sinful indulgence: and in a different sense from what is said of vain idols, he had eyes, but saw not; ears, but heard not; a nose, and smelt not; and a tongue, which tasted only heavenly things. Finally, the traits of a vain beauty fade away; but his beauty had long since been altogether within, and he was wholly occupied in adorning his soul with the gifts of grace and of righteousness.

Such a person therefore experiences no change on a death-bed. His body decays; every creature vanishes: the light recedes whole nature returns into non-

existence: and in the midst of all these changes he alone experiences none; he alone continues the same. How great, my brethren, does faith make the believer on his death-bed! How worthy of God, of angels, and of men, is the sight of a righteous man in his last moments! It is then that the believer appears superior to the world and to every creature: it is then that such a soul, partaking of the greatness and immutability of God to whom it is about to be united, is elevated above every thing: it is in the world, without taking part in it; in a mortal body, without being attached to it: in the midst of neighbours and friends, without either seeing or knowing them; amidst the tears and groans of friends, without hearing them; in the midst of the confusion and movements which its departure occasions around it, without its tranquillity being in the least disturbed: "He is free among the dead" (Psalm lxxxvii. 6). He is already immoveable in the bosom of God, amidst the destruction of all things. Once more, how great does he appear in having lived in the observance of the law of the Lord, and in dying in his fear! How great does the elevation of faith appear in that last moment of his glory and triumph; it is the point in which all the glory of his life, and of his virtue, is united. How beautiful it is to behold the righteous walk with a tranquil and majestic step towards eternity! And what reason had the wicked prophet, when he beheld the triumphant march and confident songs of Israel, on entering the promised land, to exclaim, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!"

And it is the thought of futurity, my brethren, which, in the last place, fills the faithful man, with joy and consolation on his dying bed: *Securitas de aternitate*: "Safe respecting eternity." The sinner, while in health, beheld eternity with a tranquil eye; but in his last moment beholding it nearer, his tranquillity is converted into terror and amazement. The righteous man, on the contrary, during the days of his mortal life, dared not regard with a

fixed eye, the depth of the Divine judgments; he worked out his salvation with fear and trembling; he trembled at the mere thought of that awful hereafter, in which the righteous could scarcely be saved, if they were judged without mercy: but, on a death-bed, ah! the God of peace manifests himself to him, and calms his agitations: his fears subside, and are converted into a pleasing hope. With his dying eyes he already looks through the clouds of mortality, which still surround him; and he, like Stephen, beholds the bosom of the Divine glory, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of his Father, ready to receive him: that immortal country, after which he had so ardently sighed, and in which, in spirit, he had always dwelt: that holy Zion, which the God of his fathers fills with his glory and presence, in which he satisfies his elect with the river of delights, and causes them daily to taste the inconceivable blessings which he had prepared for them that love him; the city of the people of God, the abode of the saints, the dwelling of prophets and righteous men, where he will again behold the brethren to whom love had united him while on earth, and with whom he will eternally celebrate the mercy of the Lord and the praises of his grace.

Ah! when the ministers of the church, at length, come to inform such a person that his hour is arrived, and that eternity approaches;—when they come to announce to him in the name of the church which sends them, “Depart Christian soul:” Leave at length the land in which thou hast so long been a stranger and a captive: the time of trial and tribulation is ended; behold, at length, the righteous Judge come to break the bonds of thy mortality return into the bosom of God from whence thou proceededst; leave, at length, a world which was not worthy of thee. “Depart, Christian soul:” The Lord has at last been moved with thy tears: He comes at length to open to thee the way of the saints, and the everlasting gates. Depart, faithful soul: Go and unite with the church in

heaven, which awaits thy arrival ; but remember thy brethren whom thou leavest upon the earth, still exposed to temptations and storms—suffer thyself to be affected with the sad state of the church below, which begot thee in Jesus Christ, and which sees thee depart with envy—solicit the termination of its captivity, and its complete reunion with its spouse, from which it is continually separated. Depart, Christian soul: Those who sleep in the Lord will not perish without hope : we lose thee upon earth, only that we may find thee again in a short time with Jesus Christ in the kingdom of his saints: the body which thou art about to leave a prey to worms and corruption, will soon follow thee, immortal and glorious: not a hair of thy head will perish: an immortal seed will remain in thy ashes until the day of revelation, when thy dry bones will be reanimated, and will appear more brilliant than the light. What happiness for thee, to be at length free from all the miseries which still afflict us; to be no more liable, like thy brethren, to lose thy God whom thou art about to enjoy; to close thine eyes upon all the scandals which grieve us—upon all the vanities which seduce us—upon all the examples which draw us aside—upon all the attachments which now divide us, and the agitations which dissipate our minds! What a felicity to leave a place where every thing wearies and corrupts us—where we are a burden to ourselves—where we live only to render ourselves miserable; and to go into an abode of peace, joy, and serenity, in which there is no other occupation than to enjoy the God whom we love: “Depart, Christian soul;”—what glad tidings of joy and immortality to such a righteous man! How happy an announcement! With what peace, confidence, and thanksgiving does he accept it! He raises his dying eyes to heaven, like the aged Simeon; and, beholding his Lord’s approach, he says secretly to him, Break, O my God, when it pleaseth thee, these remains of mortality, these feeble bonds that still retain me: I wait in peace and hope for the fulfilment of thy

eternal promises. Thus purified by the expiations* of a holy and Christian life—fortified by the last remedies of the church—washed in the blood of the Lamb—sustained by the hope of the promises—comforted by the secret unction of the Spirit who dwelleth in him—ripe for eternity, he closes his eyes with a sacred joy upon every terrestrial object; he falls asleep in the Lord, and returns to the bosom of God, from which he proceeded.

My brethren, reflections are here needless. Such is the end of those who have lived in the fear of God: their death, as well as their life, is precious in the sight of the Lord. Such is the deplorable end of those who have forgotten him till their last hour: the death of the sinner is, in the sight of the Lord, as abominable as his life. If you live in sin, you will die in the horrors and useless regrets of a sinner, and your death will be an eternal death. If you live in the practice of righteousness, you will die in the peace and confidence of the righteous, and your death will only be the passage to a happy immortality. Amen.

* See Note K, in Appendix.

SERMON X.

ON THE WICKED RICH MAN.

LUKE xvi. 24.

I am tormented in this flame.

WHAT are the dreadful crimes, my brethren, which have kindled the avenging fire, and prepared for this unhappy man the abyss of torment into which he is plunged? Is he a profane abuser of his own body? Has he imbrued his hands in the blood of the innocent? Has he made the widow and the orphan the prey of his injustice? Is he a man destitute of faith, morals and character—a monster of iniquity?

Listen to him, ye who believe that a life of effeminacy and ease, a life free from gross excesses, but wholly spent in indolence and self-indulgence, is a Christian life; and that to avoid doing evil, is all that is required by the Gospel. The reprobate who this day comes forth from the abyss to instruct you, was rich, saith Jesus Christ; he was clothed in purple and fine linen; he fared sumptuously every day: but he was less attentive than he should have been to the necessities of Lazarus, who languished at his gate. These are his only crimes. We in vain seek for others in the dissoluteness of his conduct; with no other is he charged. He had received great riches, and he had enjoyed their sweetness: Abraham seeks for no other cause of his condemnation. We should be rash to ascribe crimes to him which his history does not mention, and from which Jesus Christ absolves him by His silence: we should even oppose the intentions of the

Saviour, by perverting the sense and spirit of this history, and thus destroy all the fruit He proposes to derive from it.

And, my brethren, what occasion would there have been for Jesus Christ to open the abyss to shew us a profligate, a sacrilegious person, or a notorious sinner in torment? It is sufficiently known that fornicators, infidels, and thieves will have no part in his kingdom: the whole Scripture predicts the misery which is prepared for them. If, therefore, He this day lays open the bosom of hell, it is to shew us a criminal whom we did not expect to find there, and whose greatest fault consisted in being destitute of virtue: it is to teach us that a worldly life, should you stop there and run into no excess, is a criminal life in his sight and deserving of the flames of hell.

Such is the spirit and design of the history which Jesus Christ this day relates to us; and it is to this truth, the most important, perhaps, that can be treated of in Christian morals, that I am about to direct, by edifying reflections, the whole course of the Gospel for the day. In the portraiture which Jesus Christ gives of this wicked rich man, you will see the picture of an effeminate and worldly life, unaccompanied either with vice or virtue: in the recital of his punishment, you will see its condemnation and lamentable destiny; that is to say, the indolence of the world, set forth and condemned. This is the subject of this discourse.

Part I.—It is of little importance to our instruction, my brethren, to ascertain whether Jesus Christ here relates a true history that happened in Jerusalem, or whether, according to his custom, He merely wraps up, under parabolical figures, the truths of his doctrine. For whether He describes himself as an affectionate and zealous Shepherd, traversing the mountains in search of a lost sheep, and rejoicing that He has found it, laying it with pleasure upon his shoulders; or whether He really goes to Samaria

in search of a profligate woman, to reclaim her from her wanderings; the parable, as well as the real history, lays open the conscience of the sinner: so that whether the condemnation of our miserable rich man be a fact or a figure, the truth which is meant to be inculcated possesses the same reality, and the motives for our alarm are equally well founded.

There was in Jerusalem, a certain rich man, saith Jesus Christ. This was, it seems, the first circumstance that led to his ruin: he was born happy: "he was rich." Jesus Christ adds nothing odious to this circumstance. It is not said, that, born in obscurity, descended from one of the meanest tribes, and one of the least cities of Judah, he came to Jerusalem, poor and destitute; and that he had, by the vilest means, by the basest traffic, by secret and suspicious ways, raised himself to that degree of abundance and prosperity in which he afterwards appeared in the world, or that he enjoyed with insolence and pride a property which he had acquired by meanness and fraud. He was not another Zaccheus, who had raised a vast fortune upon the miseries of the public—who had exacted for himself the tribute due to Cæsar—who afterwards purchased a name with money, and exalted his meanness by the glory of dignities and the distinctions of titles. We are not left to suspect that he was descended from a covetous and rapacious ancestor—that he had only gathered up a succession of iniquity: the silence of Jesus Christ justifies him from all these reproaches. He was rich; he quietly enjoyed the patrimony of his fathers, free from ambition, exempt from care, surrounded with tranquil and domestic pleasures, and only tasting the sweets of a property which he lawfully possessed. Is there any one among you, my brethren, that has a more valid title to his riches? Yet this is the first step in his reprobation: "he was rich."

In the second place, "he was clothed with purple and fine linen." Purple cloth, it is true, was expensive; but are we informed that he, in that respect, exceeded the

limits prescribed to his rank and birth—that, his property being insufficient to support his profusions, the tradesman and the merchant suffered from his vanity and magnificence; “and that at length,” as saith the prophet, “his pride and ostentation surpassed his strength” (Isai. xvi. 6). That age was not acquainted with the disorders which are so common in ours, in which luxury confounds every condition; when a little property causes the tax-gatherer to vie in splendour with the princes of the people; when the public misery, by increasing complaints, seems to increase profusion; when we no longer know men by their names, or women by their faces, and when they are considered modest if they do not exceed the customary extravagance, and only conform to the folly and excess of fashion. It is not related to the reproach of this wicked man that criminal designs and passions were connected with his attention to his dress, or that he alleged that simplicity of intention which you, women of the world! continually make an excuse for the indecency and artifice of your attire. In a word, this rich man was clothed sumptuously; he loved splendour and magnificence; and when the worship in the synagogue was sensible and gross; when it was thought that the magnificence of the temple and the pomp of sacrifices honoured the Lord; when the exterior glory of ceremonies constituted all their majesty; when God had manifested Himself only under grand and glorious symbols, such excess was more excusable than under the Gospel, when Jesus Christ, poor and humble, is become an example of modesty and simplicity to every believer.

In the third place, “he fared sumptuously every day:” but the law of Moses only forbade excess; it did not require that rigorous restraint on the senses, which the Gospel has since prescribed. Milk and honey were included in the promises made to the children of Abraham, and they were allowed to enjoy the sweets of an abundance which had been proposed as the recompence of their fidelity. He

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ship, and that religion was an human invention : he offered the appointed sacrifices, he practised the appointed abstinences ; in a word, he is not called a cruel master, a perfidious friend, an irreconcilable enemy, an unfaithful husband ; nor is he accused of being proud, unjust, or disloyal. He did not employ his property to corrupt the innocent ; the bed of his neighbour he never violated ; the reputation and prosperity of others had never led him to envy or calumniate them : he is spoken of as faring sumptuously, as living expensively in Jerusalem, as leading an effeminate and quiet life : in other respects, he was strictly honest and regular in his conduct ; he lived exempt from reproach, and as the world expects those to live who possess riches ; he received citizens and strangers to his table ; finally, he was one of those whom the present age commends, extols, and proposes as models ; and which piety itself would seldom dare to condemn.

Now, my brethren, such as I have just described him, and such as he was in reality, does he appear so very blameable in your eyes ? And if any one, previous to Jesus Christ, had declared that this is the way which leads to perdition, and that he was deserving of hell, would you not have condemned his indiscreet and unfeeling zeal ? Would you not have exclaimed with indignation, like the army of Israel when Saul said, "Thou shalt surely die, Jonathan," Why, what has he done ? Must he die because he has tasted a little honey ? The prejudices of infancy have left a frightful idea of this rich man in your minds ; yet what has he done ? Let us come to the truth ; let us add nothing to what the Gospel relates. He was rich ; he was splendidly attired ; he fared well. What do you find therein so shameful and enormous ? If I were to judge only from your maxims and conduct, so far from appearing very blameable, I should find him virtuous ; and, in the present general corruption of manners, were I to speak of him as a wise worldling, he would be a model which I should propose for your imitation.

What do you daily say of those who resemble him? Such a one lives nobly; he enjoys his riches with honour; his table is served with propriety and magnificence: he is a worthy man and a steady friend, and is full of that honesty which constitutes true religion and solid virtue. This is not all; they not only commend him, but, O my God! they make comparisons injurious to the piety of Thy servants: they say that we ought to live thus in the world, and not like such and such persons, whose devotion has embittered their tempers, and who disgrace true piety by uncomely airs and imprudent singularities. Such is the world, my brethren; and I tremble when I reflect that the only reprobate which Jesus Christ shews to us in the Gospel would be found, in the present day, the most worthy person among us.

Perhaps you will here object his cruelty to Lazarus; and in that, at least, you think you possess some advantage over him. To that ground of confidence I would only answer, with St. Paul, "In vain would you give all your goods to feed the poor, if you were destitute of that charity which believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things, pardoneth all things; which is neither vain; envious, selfish, nor voluptuous." If the purity of your conduct does not correspond with the abundance of your bounty, you do nothing, and you are nothing before God. (1 Cor. xiii. 2, &c.) Alms help to expiate the sins of which we sincerely repent; but they do not justify those in which we continue to live: it is a duty required of us, but it is not the only one; and although to fail therein is to be guilty of all, yet to observe that duty is not the whole of the law.

Besides, let us see how far this rich voluptuary was really criminal; and, perhaps, you will find yourselves still more blameable than he. "There was also," continued Jesus Christ, "a poor man called Lazarus, covered with sores, who was laid at his gate, who desired to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table; but no

one gave unto him." There is, in this conduct, I allow, something which wounds every feeling of humanity: the spectacle of a voluptuary seated at a table loaded with exquisite viands, unaffected with the sufferings of a miserable creature that was under his eyes, covered with sores, and reduced to desire the crumbs that fall from the table, to appease his violent hunger, forms a monstrous contrast; and mere worldly virtue is indignant at such barbarity. But let us consider all the circumstances, and you will see that Jesus Christ did not aim to represent this rich man as a monster of inhumanity, but as an indolent person, too much engaged with his pleasures, and wholly inattentive to the miseries of Lazarus. You will see that this circumstance which relates to this poor man is only an incident, so to speak, of the history, and that the effeminate and luxurious life of the rich man constitutes the real and principal subject.

In the first place, Lazarus was a public beggar. Now, we are naturally more inattentive to the misery of these professed indigents, who have a whole city for a witness of their wretchedness, and for the resource of their necessities: we can always persuade ourselves that their perpetual importunities are mere artifice; and that idleness, rather than want, occasions their complaints and miseries: in a word, the excuses which you daily employ to rebuke these poor vagrants, the rich man might employ to excuse his neglect of Lazarus. Perhaps private distresses, or public works of mercy, which had more flattered his vanity, would have found him more benign and compassionate.

Secondly, Lazarus, covered with sores, was, it is true, laid at the gate of this rich man. An object so deserving of pity ought indeed to have softened him; but it was something, at least, that a miserable being, so offensive to the sight, was permitted to continue at his gate without being repulsed; that nothing cutting or cruel was uttered by the rich man, when he had the same object continually before his eyes; and that he suffered this unfortunate man

to make his porch his constant asylum. You would, my dear hearer, have perhaps hastened to shew your liberality; but an eager desire to remove so repulsive an object from your sight, would have been a more powerful motive than the wish to comfort a member of Jesus Christ. Perhaps, to spare your delicacy a moment's disgust, you would not have thought your afflicted brother worthy to receive an alms from your hand; you would have charged a domestic to dispense it, instead of recognising in his ulcerated flesh the emblem of the shameful diseases which your soul displays in the sight of God, and of expiating the lust of your eyes by allowing them to rest upon so disagreeable an object: and thus you would, perhaps, have been more guilty before God, by an excessive delicacy, than the reprobate of our Gospel was by his indolence and forgetfulness.

Finally, they did not give him even the crumbs which fell from the table. But it is not said that Lazarus had asked for them; it is merely said that he desired them: the rich man is not charged with having denied them to him; it is only said no one gave unto him: it is not said that Lazarus spake to him, that he importuned him, or that he made known his hunger and misery. Lazarus is silent, and leaves his sores to speak in his favour. This reserve seemed still more ardently to solicit the pity of the rich man; but his rank, his dissipations, his pleasures, scarcely permitted him to descend to these particulars and to enter into these considerations. Perhaps he had ordered negligent servants to relieve him; for in this way is the liberality of those who resemble him continually limited. In a word, he is not represented to us so guilty of cruelty, as of indolence and inattention.

Besides, when Abraham, from the height of the celestial habitation, informs him of the cause of his condemnation, he does not speak to him, as Jesus Christ will speak to reprobates at the last day: Lazarus "was naked, and you clothed him not; he was hungry, and you gave him

no meat ; he was sick, and you visited him not : ” he contents himself with saying to him, “ Son, remember that you in your life-time received your good things. ” Remember that you suffered nothing upon the earth : this is not the way that leads to the rest promised to my posterity. Your fathers were always wanderers, fugitives, and strangers in the world ; they possessed nothing ; but they now enjoy in my bosom the promised inheritance, after which they so ardently sighed. You have sought your consolation upon the earth, you belong not therefore to the people of God—you are not a child of promise—you have not been blessed in me, and your portion is with infidels : you have made the place of your pilgrimage, the place of your pleasures ; this unhallowed felicity could not be lasting ; *here* every thing changes its appearance : the tears of Lazarus are wiped away, and his afflictions are removed ; but your laughter and joy are turned into gnashing of teeth ; and your momentary pleasures into endless torments. Remember, son, you received your good things in your life-time, but Lazarus evil things ; now he is comforted, and you are tormented. *This* is his crime—a life passed in effeminacy, and in the pleasures of abundance ; *this* is the cause of his condemnation : and it were temerity to seek for other reasons than those which the Spirit of God has pointed out to us in the Gospel.

You are surprised, my brethren. Are you then ignorant that it is a crime for Christians to be destitute of virtue ? Do you think that hell is open only to adulterers, fornicators, and unrighteous persons ? Ah ! If a disciple of Moses, living under an imperfect and a carnal law, in which the virtues enjoined were less sublime, the self-denial less rigorous, the restraint of the senses less severe, is reprov'd for having led an effeminate and delicate life, without either vice or virtue ; should you think that a member of Jesus Christ, a disciple of the Gospel, which commands such perfect virtue and such constant self-denial, which so strictly prohibits pleasures, which repre-

sents sufferings as so necessary, which restricts the indulgence of the senses by so many rigorous precepts, and which appoints the cross as the seal of the predestinated ; would be treated with more lenity, if, like the rich man, he should lay no restraint upon his desires, and abstain only from gross excesses and from unjust and shameful passions !

But, my brethren, it is a doctrine of salvation, that a Christian can only be predestinated to be made in this life conformed to the image of Jesus Christ. If your conduct is not a copy of His ; if the Father does not find in you the resemblance of His Son ; if the member bears different traits from the Head, and if it would be a monstrous alliance to unite them together, you will be rejected as an unfaithful likeness, as a stone of offence, which has not been formed by the hand of the workman, and which cannot enter into the building ; as a deformed member, which cannot be united to the rest of the body.

Now, my brethren, to resemble Jesus Christ, is it sufficient that you are neither a fornicator, an infidel, a sacrilegious, nor an unjust person ? Would Jesus Christ have been satisfied because He had injured no one—because He had not excited the people to rebellion, or with merely rendering to Cæsar the things that were Cæsar's ; with not having been a drunkard or a glutton ; or because his enemies could not reproach him with a single gross sin ; in a word, with not having been a Samaritan, an enemy to the Law ? Did He to this limit all his virtue ? Was He not meek and lowly in heart ? Did He not pray for his enemies ? Did He who reprov'd, love the world ? Was He conformed to it, who came only to correct and to reprove it ? Did He believe that the world would be saved, when He did not even pray for it ? Did He hasten after pleasures who pronounced a curse upon them, and who declared that the world should rejoice, but that his disciples would take no part in those vain joys, but would be sorrowful ?

Did He seek worldly honours and distinctions, who never sought his own glory, but the glory of his Father, and who hid himself when they would have made him a King! Did He lead a life of pleasure and ease, who bare his cross from the first moment of his mortal existence, and finished his course by the consummation of his sufferings? Such is your model, whether living in the world or in solitude; at court or in the cloister; consecrated to God, or divided between the Lord and the cares of a married state. If you bear not the image of Christ, you are lost.

Yet you are under no apprehensions for your fate, provided you preserve a regularity which the world approves, and that your consciences do not reproach you with gross and flagrant vices. It is evident that this state leaves you in no alarm for your salvation; for, when we propose to your imitation the example of those who, after leading a life similar to your own, have discovered its danger and withdrawn from the pleasures and dissipations of the world, and made prayer, retirement, mortification, and the practice of holy works to succeed, you reply, It is dangerous to fix so high a standard; that you think yourselves wise in avoiding these pretended excesses, and you see nothing to amend in your own conduct. St. Augustin formerly lamented that certain Pagans in his time refused to be converted to the faith, because they lived a regular life in the esteem of the world. When they were exhorted, saith that father, to pass over to the side of the Christians, 'The question,' said they, 'is to live well: What will Jesus Christ, whom you preach, command me? That I should lead a blameless life? I have for a long time led such a life. I injure no one; I neither defile my neighbour's bed, nor do I, by unjust means, despoil him of his property. What occasion is there to alter, or to embrace a new life? If my life were criminal, you would be in the right to propose to me a law which should regulate my morals and forbid excess; but if, without the law

of Christ, I avoid those evils, then Jesus Christ is no longer necessary to me? What need have I of Christ?

Such is, my brethren, exactly the situation of those voluptuous and indolent Christians, of those virtuous men of the age, of those irreproachable characters in the world's esteem, of whom I speak. When we exhort them to a more Christian life, to be more conformed to the maxims of the Gospel, to the examples of the saints and of Jesus Christ—when we assert that they cannot be his disciples without renouncing the world and its pleasures, as we promised at the sacred font; they reply, that the question is not concerning the forsaking or continuing in certain pleasures—the amusing ourselves at the theatre, or the making a scruple of doing so—the regulating our expense, dress, manner of life, according to custom, or the affecting to be singular;—that the question is to live well, to be a good citizen, a faithful husband, a generous, just, disinterested and sincere master; that this is the main point; that by these virtues men are every where saved, and that every thing beside, which we add to devotion, is unnecessary: I now live well, what need have I of Christ?

But attend to what is said by the same father upon this subject in another place. Their conduct is irreproachable in the world's esteem: they are honest men; they are prudent women; they honour their parents; they do not deceive their brethren; they are faithful to their promises; they are guilty of no injustice, but they are not Christians. Why is this? Christians have crucified their flesh with its affections and lusts; but you nourish, and continually flatter these domestic enemies: Christians are not of the world; but you are its slaves, its partisans, and its apologists: Christians incessantly groan within themselves through the dangers of sense, and the objects of vanity which surround them; but you love them: Christians constantly do violence to themselves; but you live in indolence and in a profound peace with yourselves: Christians

are pilgrims upon the earth, who attach themselves to nothing here below—who despise every thing that is found in their way, and incessantly sigh after their own country, that is, a heavenly one; but you wish to establish a permanent city upon the earth, and to immortalize yourselves in this vale of tears: Christians redeem the time because it is short, and all their days are filled up before the Lord; but your life is one great void, and the being useless is indeed the most innocent portion of it: Christians regard riches as incumbrances, dignities as snares, grandeur as the summit of a precipice, afflictions as favours, prosperity as a misfortune, the fashion of the world as a dream; do you view things in the same light? In a word, Christians are spiritual; and you are altogether carnal: You are not Christians.

Ah! if to be a Christian, it were only necessary to avoid excess, did not Paganism furnish us with men who were wise, regular, and temperate in their conduct; with women of fortitude, of an austere virtue, and an heroic conduct—who were attached to duty by the principles of glory and honour: and does all that we now behold the most virtuous in the world approach the severity of these ancient models? It is not, therefore, the irregularities that are shunned which constitute Christians, but the virtues of the Gospel which are practised: it is not irreproachable morals in the sight of men; it is the spirit of Christ crucified: it is not the qualities which the world admires—honour, sincerity, integrity, generosity, uprightness, moderation, and humanity; it is a living faith, a pure conscience, and unfeigned charity: every mode of life which does not merit heaven, is a sinful life; every way of life which is unbecoming a saint, is unworthy of a Christian: the tree which bears only leaves is cursed, as well as the tree that is dead and rooted up; and the Gospel condemns to the same eternal darkness, and to the same punishment, the unfaithful and the useless servant. Hence, after having set before you, in the conduct of our

rich reprobate, the image of a voluptuous and worldly life, free from crimes and debauchery, we must, in his punishment, shew you his end and miserable fate.

Part II.—"Now, it came to pass," continued Jesus Christ, "that the beggar died, and was carried by angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and in hell he lifted up his eyes." What a new state of things, my brethren! Lazarus dies first; because the Lord hastens to visit his elect, and to shorten their sufferings with their days: the rich man survives him; for the Lord opens the gates of death but slowly to sinners, in order to give them a longer space for repentance. But at length the rich man dies; for though great riches attach us to life, they do not render us immortal: he is buried; a circumstance that is wholly passed over respecting Lazarus: funeral honours are, no doubt, paid to his memory; pomp and vanity appear even upon his tomb; they set off, by superb monuments, his nothingness and ashes: but his soul, weighed down with the load of his iniquities, is already sunk deep in the eternal abyss: *Sepultus est in inferno*. Lazarus dies; his forsaken corpse scarcely finds sufficient earth to serve as a sepulchre: his end is without honour before men; but his glorified soul is, by angels, carried in triumph to Abraham's bosom. The rich man dies; all Jerusalem speak of it, praise his virtue, and boast of his magnificence; his friends lament him; his neighbours, in order to console themselves for his loss, seek to immortalize his memory by inscriptions and emblazonry. Vain solicitude of men! His name has not even reached us: we only know him by his misery; we only know that he *was* rich, and that *now* he is a reprobate: his birth, his tribe, and his family, have all perished with him; 'for the wicked,' saith the Holy Spirit, 'are perished as though they had not been, and are become as though they had never been born.' (Ecc. xliv. 9.) Lazarus dies; it is scarcely known in Jerusalem that he had lived: his death is as much disregarded

as his life. The world, which did not even know him, finds no difficulty in forgetting him ; but *his name*, written in the book of life, has been preserved in our sacred records, and continually resounds in these Christian pulpits : "for the bodies of the righteous are buried in peace ; and their names will be had in everlasting remembrance." (Ps. ciii. 6.) In a word, Lazarus dies, and is carried by angels to Abraham's bosom : the rich man dies, and his soul sinks into hell. This is a state that is unalterable. Foolish creatures that we are ! Of what importance is the condition in which the providence of God places us for the fleeting moment that we appear upon the earth ; why are we not more concerned as to what we shall be in eternity !

Now, my brethren, let us proceed with our Gospel. Let us examine all the particulars of the punishment which this wicked rich man endures in the place of torment. Scarcely was he come, saith Jesus Christ, into the place of punishment,, before, lifting up his eyes, he saw Abraham, and Lazarus in his bosom. He began by lifting up his eyes. What a surprise ! During his whole life he had never directed them to the danger of his situation ; that is to say, he had never thought of suspecting that the way in which he walked, which appeared to him so safe, and which was so approved by the world, would lead him to perdition ; for notorious sinners, wholly devoted to wickedness, are aware that their life is scandalous, and they can only quiet themselves by cherishing the hope that they shall at some future day pursue a better course : but these indolent, effeminate, voluptuous spirits, of whom I speak, who keep themselves from excesses and disorders, commonly die unconscious that they have lived a criminal life. The rich reprobate sees Lazarus afar off in Abraham's bosom, clothed with glory and immortality : this is the first particular in his punishment. The poor mendicant, covered with sores, whom he did not formerly deign to honour with a single look, is in the region of peace and felicity, while he himself is consumed in eternal flames.

What a contrast ! How much does he desire to be in his happy state ! What inward grief that he does not resemble him ! He sees, at the same time, the full extent of all the good things which he has lost ; and the irreparable calamities which he has prepared for himself. He beholds the peace, the serenity, and the pleasures that are always new, which are enjoyed by Lazarus. He accuses himself in the most dreadful manner, and in the twinkling of an eye his misfortunes are all presented before him. More grieved at heart by the constant representation of the happiness from which he is fallen, than by the grievous pains which he endures, "heaven," said one of the fathers, "burns him more than hell."

Yes, my brethren, it is thus that God will, through all eternity, expose the fulness of his glory : he will unfold the heavens before those millions of reprobates whom his vengeance will cast into the abyss, and there he will incessantly expose to every condemned soul the objects which are the most suited to excite his rage and to increase his misery.

From the bottom of this gulph some of you who now hear me will, perhaps, lift up your eyes, like this reprobate ; and, throughout eternal ages, you will see, in the bosom of Abraham, a wise and pious father, whose faith and piety always seemed to you to be either the effect of simplicity, or of the weakness of age : you will recollect his last instructions, delivered on his death-bed, by which he endeavoured to rectify your evil propensities ; the marks of affection which he then gave you, the prayers which he poured out for you in his last moments—those moments in which his religion and his love to you seemed to be revived ; and your irregularities, the riches which you have since dissipated, your ruined circumstances, your present miseries, will be set before you, together with his paternal remonstrances, and the pious example which he had given you.

You, who, in a state of widowhood, live in pleasure and

are dead before God, will again lift up your eyes, and from the midst of the flames will continually behold, in the abode of glory, the husband with whom you formed but one heart and one soul—the husband, over the ashes of whom you shed so many tears, and who, affected with your fidelity, left you the guardian of his property and children as well as of his affection; and that object, once so dear, will incessantly reproach you with the infidelity which you have since shewn to his memory—with your shameful behaviour—with employing to his dishonour the riches which he left you to console you under your affliction—and even with neglecting and sacrificing his children, the precious pledges of his remembrance and affection, to unlawful amours.

Yes, my brethren, these children of wrath will, from the midst of the flames, eternally behold their brethren, their friends, and their neighbours, with whom they had lived, in the bosom of Abraham, participating in the glory of the saints, happy in the possession of the God whom they had served. This view of the felicity of others will be the most grievous of their pains: they will feel that they were born for the same happiness, that their hearts were made to enjoy the same God; for the presence of a good to which they never had a right, or which they no longer love, less affects the miserable creatures who are deprived of it; but *here* a desire, swifter than an arrow shot by a powerful arm, will carry their hearts towards that God for whom alone they were created, while an invisible hand will push them back from him: they will feel themselves eternally torn to pieces, both by the violent efforts which their whole being will exert towards a re-union with their Creator, the end and the centre of all their desires, and by the chains of Divine justice which will drag them away, and bind them to eternal flames.

The God of glory, to increase their despair, will manifest himself to them more great and magnificent, if it be possible, than to his elect. He will display all his majesty

before their eyes, to awaken in their breasts the most ardent desires of a love inseparable from their being; and his clemency, goodness, and magnificence will more cruelly torment them than his wrath and justice. We do not, my brethren, in the present state, feel the strength of that natural love which our souls have for their Maker; because the deceitful riches which surround us, and which we mistake for the true good, either engage or divide them; but the soul once separated from the body, ah! all those phantoms which now deceive it will vanish; all those foreign attachments will perish: it can no longer love any but its God, because it will no longer discern any amiable but him; all its propensities, all its knowledge, its desires, its motions, its whole being will be concentrated in this one affection; every thing will urge it, every thing will hurry it, if I may so speak, towards the bosom of its God, and the weight of its iniquities will lead it incessantly to accuse itself: eternally compelled to soar towards heaven, and eternally hurried back to the abyss of misery, it will be more unhappy from not being able to extinguish its love, than from feeling the fearful effects of the justice and vengeance of him whom it loves.

How terrible a fate! the bosom of glory will be always open to the eyes of these unfortunate persons; they will continually say to themselves, Such is the kingdom that was prepared for us; such the lot which awaited us; such the promises that were made to us; such the Lord who alone is amiable, powerful, merciful, and immortal, for whom we were created; we have renounced him for a dream, for pleasures which endure but a moment! Ah! though we had nothing to suffer in that abode of horror and despair, could that loss be sufficiently lamented? This is the first particular which Jesus Christ relates in the torments of the rich reprobate: he is rendered miserable by the ever-present view of the felicity which he has lost.

But he is miserable also, through the recollection of the good things which he received during his life: this is the

second particular in his punishment. My son, said Abraham to him, remember that you in your life-time received your good things. What a crowd of despairing thoughts does Abraham now awaken in his mind through that recollection? The privilege of being descended from a holy people, and from a blessed race, despised; the promise made to the posterity of Abraham, rendered useless to him; the temple, the altar, the sacrifices, the law, the instructions of the Prophets, the example of the righteous, all become ineffectual to his salvation; even the temporal good things which he ought to have employed to purchase an immortal crown, employed to flatter a body destined to everlasting burnings: "Remember that you in your life time received your good things." Thus, the reprobate will, through all eternity, hear these piercing words in the midst of his torments: "Remember the good things which you received during your life-time." Recollect those days past in the midst of abundance—that crowd of slaves watching to anticipate your very wishes; the public distinctions which occasioned such pleasing and agreeable moments; those striking talents which drew upon you the esteem and admiration of the people, remember them. What a punishment will it be to the unhappy creature to compare his former with his present state. The more agreeable the view of his past felicity, the more awful will be the bitterness of his present condition; for such is the effect of adversity, it continually enlarges and places before our eyes, the pleasures of our former situation, and the misery attached to our present condition.

This is not all; he will be reminded of all the means of grace which he abused: "Remember that you in your life-time received your good things." Remember that you were the children of the saints, that you were born in the midst of a faithful people; you received all the helps of a Christian education; I gave you for a portion a mind well disposed, a heart endued with happy inclinations: almost all your moments were marked by some secret in-

spiration, or by some public event which called you to the way of salvation: I caused you to be born in circumstances highly favourable to piety; I encompassed you with numerous obstacles to the gratification of your sinful passions, and with numerous facilities to the practice of virtue, so that it became more difficult for you to lose than it would have been to save yourselves; remember it: recollect all the favours which you have so ungratefully abused, and how easy it had been for you to have escaped the misery into which you are fallen.

Ah! it is here that the reprobate, reviewing all the facilities which the goodness of God had afforded him for his salvation, becomes enraged with himself. The more clearly he discerns his former blindness, the more his anguish irritates and preys upon his soul, and the more his rage is excited and increased: and the most tolerable occupation of his despair, is eternally to hate himself. O God! how righteous art thou in the punishment which thou inflictest on the sinner, since thou renderest him the most dreadful instrument of his own misery! This is the second particular in the torment of the unhappy being: he is miserable by the remembrance of the past.

He is miserable also by the present pains which he endures: "I am tormented in this flame:" this is the third particular in his punishment; the agreement of his torment with his faults. Eternal flames kindle on his libidinous tongue; an ardent thirst devours him; he demands a drop of water, not to extinguish, but to alleviate the avenging heat which consumes him, and even that is denied him. Instead of purple and fine linen, with which he was formerly clothed, he is encompassed with a vestment of flames: in a word, in proportion as he lived in pleasure, torments are recompensed unto him. We know not what he has suffered, my brethren, nor do I pretend to explain it to you, or to weaken so terrific an image by vulgar descriptions; but we know that he has cried for two thousand years, "I am tormented in this

flame." We know that he suffers what eye hath not seen, what ear hath not heard, what the spirit of man cannot conceive: we know that eternal flames, kindled by Divine justice, are attached to his body, and that he suffers all that God himself can inflict upon a guilty sinner, in whose punishment he is interested: we know that in the abode of horror and despair, the victim will be salted with eternal fire—will be constantly consuming and constantly reviving from its ashes: we know that a secret, devouring worm, placed by the hand of God in his very heart, will continue to gnaw it throughout eternity: we know that his tears will never extinguish the flame which consumes him, and that, being unable to annihilate himself, gnashing of teeth will supply the place of that dreadful desire: we know that, wearied with blaspheming the Author of his being, his tongue will become the proper food of its own fury; and that his body, like a black and smoking fire-brand, as saith the prophet, will be the sport of unclean spirits, as he had been their asylum upon the earth: we know, lastly, that in the extremity of his pain, he will eternally curse the day of his birth, and the womb that bare him; that he will invoke death, and it will fly from him, and that the desire of an eternal annihilation will become the most tolerable of his thoughts: we know it, and these are the declarations of the sacred volume.

In order, my brethren, to quiet your minds respecting an hereafter, you daily say, with a lamentable air of confidence, as St. Chrysostom formerly said to the great of the court of Constantinople, that you wish to see some one return from the invisible state, to inform you what passes there. Well! continued that eloquent father, satisfy your curiosity this day—listen to this miserable person whom Jesus Christ recalls from thence, and who relates the frightful particulars of his misery: he is a preacher furnished you by hell itself. When we speak to you, respecting the torments of hell, we are, alas! obliged to soften our expressions, lest we should wound your false

delicacy. A truth which has terrified the Cæsars, converted tyrants, changed the world, is at this day scarcely ever employed except to alarm weak and vulgar minds: when these representations are made by us, they are listened to with disdain, and dismissed as suited only to the vulgar. But you ought to believe the unhappy being who relates his own miseries, and who informs you more by his cries and despair, than by his words. You listen with attention to those who return from the most distant isles, when they relate the manners and customs of countries which you never intend to visit; and why do you not listen, with greater interest, to a poor unhappy creature who comes to tell you what passes in a place from whence he alone is returned, and which will, perhaps, become your eternal abode.

But his sufferings are terrible, in proportion as he is assured that they will never terminate. This is the fourth particular in his punishment. Moreover, said Abraham to him, "there is a great gulph between you and us, so that those who would pass from hence to you cannot, neither can they pass to us that would come from thence."

The reprobate penetrates into all future ages, and sees no end to his misery: pains which are to terminate, are never without consolation, and hope is a sweet solace to the miserable. But *here* the future becomes the most terrifying of his thoughts: the more he looks into that infinite space which is before him, the greater the length which he has still to pass over: eternity is the sole limit to his torments. He would at least wish to free himself from the thought of that terrible hereafter; but the justice of God incessantly presents him with this awful image, with strength to behold, to examine, and to be filled with it, and to make it his most cruel punishment: each moment is to him an eternal torment, because each moment is only the beginning of his pains, and because each moment is without hope. To endure dreadful torments, to

suffer an eternity every moment, to suffer without resource, and daily to have its punishment renewed,—such is the dreadful fate of a lost soul. I hastily pass over all these circumstances: they are truths which it is sufficient to mention: they are of themselves important subjects for reflection, and we must leave them to be unfolded by those who now listen to them.

Finally, the sins and irregularities of his brethren, who were still living, and to whom the example of his effeminate and voluptuous life had appeared a model for imitation, and consequently an occasion of stumbling them, form the last particulars in his miserable state. “Father Abraham,” cried he, “send Lazarus at least to my father’s house, that he may warn my five brethren which are left, lest they also come into this place of torment: for if one goeth to them from the dead they will believe.” He suffers for the sins of others; all the fresh crimes into which his brethren fall, increase the fury of the flames, because they are the consequence of his offences; and he asks for their conversion as an alleviation of his misery.

Ah! my brethren, how many reprobates with whom you have formerly lived, do you suppose are now tormented in hell for the faults into which you daily continue to fall? Perhaps the miserable being who first corrupted your innocence, is at this very time crying in the place of punishment; and outrageously craving permission of his Judge to come and shew the frightful spectre, which formerly kindled, in your previously modest soul, those impure desires which have been the cause of your licentious conduct since. Perhaps the infidel, too late undeceived, who taught you to doubt the faith of your fathers, and who corrupted your mind and heart by the maxims of irreligion and libertinism, lifts up his voice in the abode of horror and despair, and requests permission to come and warn you of your danger, and to mitigate his torment by correcting your incredulity. Perhaps that profane and licen-

tious writer, whose works, fatal to modesty, still make such dangerous impressions upon your innocence, utters horrid cries out of the midst of the flames, and in vain solicits that some companion of his punishment may be sent to inform you of the wretchedness of his fate. Perhaps the inventor of those criminal performances to which you run with so much eagerness, feels the severity of his pains increase, in proportion as the dangerous and irreparable fruits of his art convey a new poison to your minds; perhaps he causes his roaring to arise even to the bosom of Abraham, entreating leave to come and present himself with his horrific person, wrapt in eternal flames, upon those infamous theatres which he formerly erected, that he may prevent, by the terrors of such a new spectacle, the ruin of those which owed their birth to him.

But what answer does Abraham give to these reprobates? "They have Moses and the Prophets," and also the precepts of Jesus Christ; and if the truths of the Scripture do not reform you, in vain would one arise from the dead to convert you; and such a spectacle would leave you still incredulous. "They have Moses and the Prophets; if they hear not them, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead." You think that a miracle—that one raised from the dead—that an angel sent from God to address you, would induce you to renounce the world, and to amend your life. You daily say so: you mistake, my brethren: you would still find reasons to doubt; your depraved hearts would still find excuses, to arm themselves against the evidences of truth. The miracles of Jesus Christ neither corrected the hypocrisy of the Pharisees, nor the incredulity of the Sadducees. They became more inexcusable; but they remained equally incredulous. The greatest miracles of religion are the sublimity of its doctrine, the sanctity of its morality, the magnificence and Divinity of our sacred writings: if you are not affected, enlightened, and changed by them, every thing

else would be useless : " They have Moses and the Prophets ; if they hear not them, neither would they be persuaded though one rose from the dead . "

Read those sacred books, my brethren ; begin and end every day with them ; since this is the sole expedient which Jesus Christ this day proposes to us, to escape the fate of the reprobate mentioned in our Gospel. Alas ! my brethren, if you meditated upon those sacred books, we should have no occasion to come to you to prove that a worldly and voluptuous life, even if free from disorder, is a criminal life, and deserving of hell : we should not be obliged to inform you, that the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence—that not to deny ourselves daily—that to seek consolation in the world, and not to use it as though we used it not, and that to live only to the body is to lose our souls, and to give evidence that we are not the disciples of Jesus Christ ; these are the most simple and familiar truths of the Gospel, the first principles of the doctrine of salvation.

And truly, in whatever state of opulence or prosperity you may have been born, like this rich man, are the days of your pilgrimage sufficiently long, either quietly to yield up yourselves to the pleasures which surround you, or to make you uneasy at the painful duties which assure you of a better state ? We appear for a moment upon the earth, and in the twinkling of an eye every thing vanishes from before our eyes, and we enter into the abyss of eternity. What impression therefore can those pleasures make upon your hearts, which will so soon terminate, and which will leave nothing real but the regret of having enjoyed them ? What ! suppose that during a long life, you were to have only one agreeable dream, and that all the rest of your days were destined to expiate by indescribable torments, the pleasures of that short reverie, would your lot appear very enviable ? Such is, nevertheless, your destiny, saith St. Chrysostom ; you, who live in pleasure, and in the forgetfulness of God, you resemble a man who dreams

That he is happy, and who, being awaked by a terrible
Dance, sees the vain phantom of felicity vanish away which
caused his slumbering senses—every thing annihilated
round him, every thing disappearing from before his eyes,
and an eternal abyss open, or avenging flames preparing
eternally to punish the fleeting error of an agreeable dream.
Meditate upon these sacred truths, my brethren ; learn
what is the hope and duty of your calling, so that despising
all that is transient, you may never lose sight of eternal
blessings. Amen.

SERMON XI.

ON THE SMALL NUMBER OF THE ELECT.

LUKE iv. 27.

And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet ; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian.

You frequently inquire, my brethren, if it is true that the way to heaven is so difficult, and the number of the saved so small as we affirm. To a question so often proposed, and still more frequently resolved, Jesus Christ this day gives you an answer, that there were many widows in Israel distressed by famine, and that only the widow of Sarepta merited relief from the prophet Elijah ; that the number of lepers in Israel was great, in the time of the prophet Elisha, and yet Naaman alone was cleansed by the man of God.

If I came here, my brethren, to alarm rather than to instruct you, it would suffice simply to set before you the most terrific things which we read in the Holy Scriptures, relative to this great truth ; and, tracing the history of the righteous from age to age, to shew you that the elect have, at all times, been very few. Only the family of Noah was saved from the general deluge ; only Abraham was selected from the rest of the world as the guardian of the covenant ; only Joshua and Caleb, out of six hundred thousand Hebrews, were introduced into the promised land ; Job was the only righteous man in the land of Uz ; Lot the only one in Sodom ; the three Jewish youths the only righteous in Babylon.

To such terrific relations the expressions of the Prophets would have succeeded. You would have seen in Israel the elect as scarce as the grapes found after the vintage, which had escaped the diligence of the gatherer; as rare as the ears of corn which have been by chance left after the harvest, and which had been spared by the sickle of the reaper.

The Gospel would also have added new terrors to these images. I should have spoken to you of two ways: the one rough and narrow, and frequented by few; the other broad and spacious, adorned with flowers, and crowded with multitudes. In short, by leading you to remark, that, in the Holy Scriptures, the multitude is every where the party of the reprobate; and that the elect, compared with the rest of mankind, form only a little flock which almost escape our notice; I should have left you in the most cruel alarms respecting your salvation—alarms which are always grievous to those who have not wholly renounced the faith, and the hope of their calling.

But what should I effect by confining the fruit of this discourse to the convincing you that very few will be saved? Alas! I should shew you your danger, without teaching you to avoid it: I should, with the prophet, shew you the sword of Divine wrath elevated over your heads; but I should not assist you to shun the threatened stroke: I should alarm the consciences of sinners; but I should not instruct them.

My design therefore, at this time, is to seek in our own conduct the reason of this small number. As every one flatters himself that he shall not be rejected, it concerns each one to examine whether his confidence is well founded. In pointing out to you the causes which render salvation so rare, I do not wish to lead you to a general conclusion that few will be saved; but to compel you to ask yourselves, whether, living as you now do, you can expect to be so? What am I? What am I doing for heaven? And what are my hopes for eternity?

penance prescribed by the canons was a remedy but seldom resorted to; and among those true Israelites there was scarcely found a single leper whom they were obliged to remove from the sacred altar, and to separate from the communion of his brethren.

But the faith having since that time been weakened through its more extensive diffusion, the number of the truly righteous has diminished, in proportion as that of professed believers has increased; the progress of the Gospel has arrested the progress of piety; and the whole world, now professedly Christian, has brought into the church its corruptions and maxims. Alas! we most of us go astray from the womb: the first impulse of the heart is to transgress; our first propensities are sinful; and our reason unfolds and enlarges only upon the ruins of our innocence. The earth, said a prophet, is defiled with the corruptions of those who inhabit it: all have violated the laws, changed the customs, and broken the covenant which ought to have been constantly maintained: all are workers of iniquity, and scarcely is an individual to be found that doeth good; injustice, calumny, falsehood, perfidy, adultery, and the vilest crimes have deluged the earth; brother ensnareth brother, the father riseth up against his children, the husband against his wife: there are no bands which a vile self-interest does not divide. Honesty is the virtue only of the simple, enmities are perpetuated, reconciliations are feigned, and an enemy is never regarded as a brother: men tear and devour each other, their intercourse is devoted to scandal, the most perfect virtue is no longer secure from aspersion, diversions are become scenes of fraud or of anger; social repasts, those innocent bonds of society, are carried to excesses of which we dare not speak: public amusements are turned into schools of licentiousness, our age witnesses enormities with which our fathers were not even acquainted, the city is a sinful Nineveh, the court the centre of sinful passions; virtue, justified by the example of the sovereign, honoured with his countenance, encour-

raged by his favours, makes men more secret and circumspect in their wickedness, but does not, perhaps, render it less general. All states and conditions have corrupted their ways : the poor murmur against the Hand that strikes them, the rich forget the Author of their abundance ; the great appear to be born only for themselves ; and licentiousness appears the only privilege of their elevation. The very salt of the earth has lost its savour ; the lamps of Jacob are extinguished ; the stones of the sanctuary are vilely dragged into the filth of public assemblies, and the priest is become like the people. O God ! is this thy church, and the assembly of thy saints ? is this thy much cherished heritage, thy beloved vine, the object of thy solicitude and affection ? What more criminal, in thine eyes, did Jerusalem present when thou didst strike it with an eternal malediction ?

Thus one method of salvation is closed against almost every man : all have gone astray. Whoever you are that now hear me, there was a time when you were under the dominion of sin : age has, perhaps, weakened your passions ; but what was your conduct in your youth ? Habitual infirmities have, perhaps, brought on an aversion to the world ; but how did you previously employ the season of health ? The grace of God has perhaps changed your heart ; but do you not incessantly pray that the Lord would blot out from his remembrance the whole period that preceded that change ?

But how do I amuse myself ? We are, O my God ! all sinners, and thou knowest us ; that which we perceive of our wanderings is, perhaps, in thy sight, the most excusable part of our conduct ; and thus, upon the ground of innocence, we are all agreed that we can have no expectation of salvation : only one resource, therefore, remains to us—that is, penitence. After our shipwreck, said the saints, this is the happy plank which alone can conduct us to the port ; there is for us no other way of salvation. Whoever you are, whether a prince or a subject, whether a person

in high or in low circumstances, having been a sinner you can be saved only through penitence.

Now, permit me to inquire, where are those among us who are penitents? Where are they? Do they form a numerous body in the church? You will, said one of the fathers, find more who have never fallen, than you will of those who, after having fallen, have risen again by sincere repentance. This observation is terrible. We admit this to be an expression which we must not too rigidly insist upon, although the words of the saints are at all times worthy of regard. Let us not carry things so far: the truth is sufficiently alarming without adding to it new terrors by vain declamations. But let us examine whether most of us have any right to pretend to salvation on the ground of penitence.

What is a penitent? A penitent, said Tertullian, is a believer who is every moment sensible of the misfortune which he formerly had to lose and forget his God: he is one who has his sins continually before him, who every where finds their remembrance and their distressing images. A penitent is a man charged with the interests of Divine justice against himself; who denies himself the most innocent pleasures, because he has indulged in those that are criminal; who allows himself the most necessary pleasures only with reluctance; who views his body as an enemy which he must weaken, as a rebel that he must chastise, as a criminal to whom he must now deny every comfort, as a vessel which must be purified, and as a treacherous debtor from whom he must exact even the last penny. A penitent is a criminal who views himself as one appointed to death, because he no longer deserves to live—whose manners, dress, and pleasures, ought to possess a degree of seriousness and austerity, and who ought to live only to suffer. A penitent sees in the loss of his property and health, only the privation of those favours which he had abused—in the humiliations which befall him, only the chastisement of his sins—in the griefs which consume him, only the beginning

of the punishment which he has deserved—in the public calamities which afflict his brethren, the chastisement probably of his own offences. Such is a penitent. But, we again inquire, where among us are the penitents of this character? Where are they?

Ah! our fathers beheld such penitents in their days at the doors of our temples: they were less guilty, no doubt, than ourselves—penitents of every rank, age, and condition prostrate at the porch of the temple, covered with sackcloth and ashes, conjuring their brethren that were entering the house of the Lord to seek from His clemency the pardon of their offences—penitents excluded from the participation of the altar, and even from being present at the sacred mysteries, passing years in the exercise of fasts, mortifications, and prayers, and in such painful trials as the most scandalous sinners would not now submit to for a single day; debarred not only from public amusements, but likewise from the sweets of society, from communion with their brethren, and from the common joy of religious services; living as persons anathematized, separated from the sacred assembly, stripped for a season of every mark of their greatness in the world, and possessing no other consolation than that which arose from their tears and their penitence.

Such formerly were the penitents in the church: if such sinners were seen, their humiliation edified the congregation of the faithful more than their fall had stumbled it; these were some of those happy faults which become more useful even than innocence. We know a wise dispensation has obliged the church to set aside such public trials of penitents; and if I here recal their history, it is not to blame the prudence of those pastors who abolished them, but to lament the general corruption of believers which obliged them to do so. A change of manners in different ages necessarily occasions variations in discipline. Exterior policy, founded upon the laws of men, admits of change; but the law of penitence, derived from the Gospel and the word of God, is always the same: the

different degrees of public penance no longer exist, it is true ; but the rigours and the spirit of penitence are still the same, and never can be proscribed. We may satisfy the church without undergoing the public punishments which it formerly imposed : we cannot satisfy God without offering to Him something which equals them, or is a just compensation.

Now, look around you : we do not direct you to judge your brethren ; but examine the conduct of those by whom you are surrounded : we do not even speak of open transgressors, who have shaken off the yoke, and who no longer set any bounds to their wickedness ; we speak only of those who resemble you, who live like the generality of mankind, and whose lives present no scandalous or open violations of the law of God : they are sinners, they would acknowledge that they are so ; and you readily admit that you are not innocent. Now, are they penitents, or are you such ? Age, business, or more serious affairs have perhaps withdrawn you from the excesses of your youth. The trials which the goodness of God has been pleased to make the consequence of sinful passions ;—treacheries, reproach, a diminished fortune, a broken constitution and disordered circumstances, have perhaps cooled and restrained the irregular propensities of your nature. Wickedness has created an aversion even to wickedness ; the passions have, by little and little, been extinguished ; time and mere fickleness of mind have broken your bonds : yet, though disgusted with the creature, you have not become the more alive towards God : you are perhaps become more prudent and regular, in the eyes of the world, more of a man of probity, more exact in your public and private duties ; but you are not penitent : you have discontinued your irregularities ; but you have not expiated them—you have not been converted—that great change of heart, which renews the whole man, you have not experienced.

Yet this dangerous state has nothing which alarms you :

sins from which you have never been cleansed by sincere repentance, and that have not consequently been remitted by God, are in your eyes as if they had never been committed; and you die tranquil in a state of impenitence—that is the more dangerous, in consequence of your dying ignorant of your situation. This is not a mere sally of zeal; nothing is more real or more exactly true: it is the situation of almost every man; even of the wisest and most approved in the world. Our early manners are always licentious; age, disgust, or a settlement in life fixes the heart—withdraws us from our irregularities—reconciles us even to the holy mysteries of our religion: but where are those who are truly converted? Where are those who expiate their crimes by tears and mortifications? Where are those, who, after having begun as sinners, have ended as penitents? Where are they? Declare unto us.

Shew us even the slightest traces of penitence in your conduct. What? will you plead your conformity to the laws of the church? But those laws no longer relate to persons of your description; and custom has almost succeeded in rendering the duties suited to your circumstances obscure and vulgar. What? will you plead your anxieties to augment your fortunes—the inquietudes which attend prosperity and the favour of the prince—the fatigues of military service—the disgusts and the restraints of the court—the submissions imposed by the posts which you fill, or by the decorum which they enjoin? Do you then wish to put your crimes among the number of your virtues—that God should place to your account labours which you did not endure for his sake—that your ambition, pride, and lust, should discharge you from an obligation which they themselves impose upon you? You are penitents of the world: but you are not penitents of Jesus Christ. Finally, will you plead the infirmities with which God afflicts you? the enemies which he raises up against you? the disgraces and losses which he appoints

to you? But do you receive these strokes merely with submission? And instead of finding occasions in them for the exercise of penitence, do you not make them the subject of fresh crimes? But though you were faithful in all these respects, would that constitute you penitents? For an individual to receive with submission the strokes with which God afflicts him—to fulfil with courage the painful duties of his condition—to be faithful to the laws of the church, are the duties of an innocent person: but do you, who are sinners, owe nothing beside? And yet you expect salvation; but upon what ground? Will you say that you are innocent before God? your consciences will then testify against you. Would you persuade us that you are penitents? you dare not attempt it, and your own mouths would condemn you. Upon what then, O man, canst thou depend, while thou livest so much at thine ease? Where is now thy boasting?

And that which is terrible here is this, that you only follow the stream: almost every one pursues the same course. You, perhaps, know some more culpable than yourselves; for we suppose that you still retain some sentiments of religion and some concern for your salvation; but do you know any that are true penitents? We must seek for them in the cloisters, or in the desert: you can scarcely find a small number among persons of your own rank and condition, whose manners, more austere than those of the generality, attract the notice, and, perhaps, also the censure of the public: all the rest walk in the same way. I see, every one is confirmed by his neighbours: children succeed to the false confidence of their fathers. No one lives innocent; no one dies penitent: I behold it, and I exclaim, O God! if Thou hast not deceived us; if all that Thou hast told us concerning the way that leads to life is to be fulfilled even to a tittle; if the number of those who will be lost does not cause Thee to abate the severity of Thy laws; into what a state will that infinite multitude of sinners be plunged who are daily re-

moved by death from the midst of us? Where are our friends, our neighbours, our sovereigns, and our fellow-subjects who have preceded us; and what is their state in the eternal regions of the dead? And what will be our condition in the future world?

When a prophet formerly complained to the Lord, that all Israel had forsaken his covenant, God informed him that he had reserved seven thousand men who had not bowed the knee to Baal: these were all the holy and faithful persons which a whole kingdom then contained. But wouldest Thou, O my God! now console the groans of Thy servants by the same assurance? I know that thine eye still discerns some righteous in the midst of us; that the priesthood has its Phinehases; the magistracy its Samuels; the army its Joshuas; the court its Daniels, its Esthers, and its Davids; because the world exists only for the sake of thine elect, and it would be destroyed if their number were completed: but how small is the happy remnant of the children of Israel that will be saved, when compared with the grains of sand upon the sea shore; that is to say, with the infinite multitude who will perish!

Will you again, my brethren, come to inquire whether it is true that few will be saved? Thou hast said it, O my God! and therefore it is a truth which will endure for ever. But though God had not declared it, I need only, in the second place, for a single moment regard what passes among men; the laws by which they are governed, the maxims which are become the rules of the multitude. This is the second cause of the small number of the elect, which is indeed only an unfolding of the first; the influence of custom and example.

Part II.—Few are saved, because the maxims which are most generally adopted in every situation, and by which the practice of the multitude is regulated are maxims incompatible with salvation: for, in reference to the employment of wealth, the love of glory, Christian moderation,

the obligations of different offices and conditions, and the detail of appointed duties, the rules which are received, approved, and authorized in the world, are in direct contradiction to those of the Gospel, and therefore they must inevitably lead to perdition.

I shall not now enter into particulars too numerous for a discourse, and not sufficiently serious for the Christian pulpit. I need not at present inform you that it is an established opinion in the world, that men may regulate their expenses by their wealth and their rank ; and, provided their property is the patrimony of their fathers, they may value themselves thereupon, set no bounds to their luxury, and consult, in their profusions, only their pride and their caprice. But Christian moderation has its rules. You are not the absolute masters of your property, particularly at a time when poverty and wretchedness are so prevalent : all therefore that you employ above your necessities, and above what your situation in life requires, is an act of cruelty to the poor. These, say some, are the refinements of devotion ; and in matters of expense and profusion, nothing is blameable and excessive in the world's esteem, except that which may impair their fortune or bring their affairs into disorder.

I need not inform you that custom authorizes the practice of always deciding upon our calling, and of directing our choice, either of the world or of the church—of a single or of a married state—according to the order of our birth, or the promotion of our fortune. But does, O my God ! the heavenly vocation derive its source from those human laws which relate to a natural descent ? We cannot establish all our children to our mind in the world, and it would be painful to see them pursue a calling unworthy of their birth or their rank.

I need not tell you, that custom requires that the young females whom we educate for the world should be early instructed in all the arts that are suited to please and to captivate ; and that they should be trained up with care in

a fatal practice, respecting which their own hearts are, by nature, but too well instructed. But a Christian education inculcates on young females retirement, bashfulness, modesty, and a hatred of the world. It is in vain said, that we must live like others; and mothers, in other respects Christian and prudent, do not even entertain a doubt upon this subject.

Besides, you are yet young; it is the season of pleasure it would be unreasonable to prohibit you, at your age what is allowed to others: riper years will produce more serious practices.

You inherit a title, and you are determined to accomplish your ends through intrigues, meannesses and expense: you make fortune your idol. And ambition, which is so much condemned by the word of God, is, in your esteem, only a disposition that becomes your birthright and your name.

You are of a sex and rank which raises you in the esteem of the world; you cannot adopt manners peculiar to yourself: you must be present at public entertainments, places where those of your own rank and age assemble, engage in the same pleasures, pass the day in the same trifles, expose yourself to the same perils: these are established customs, and you are not for reforming them. Such is the doctrine of the world.

Now permit me to ask, Who encourages you in these practices? By what authority do you justify them to your own mind? who authorizes you to assume that vain pomp which neither agrees with the title which you received at your baptism, nor perhaps with that which you inherit from your ancestors?—*You*, to follow those public amusements which you think to be innocent, only because your minds, too familiar with wickedness, are no longer susceptible of their dangerous impressions?—*You*, to be perpetually engaged in those games, which are become the most important occupation of your lives?—*You*, to dispense with all the laws of the church—to lead an indolent

a sensual life, without virtue, suffering, or any of the painful exercises of religion?—*You*, to solicit the awful charge and honours of the sanctuary, when solely to desire them suffices to render you unworthy of them before God?—*You*, to live as strangers in the midst of your family, without deigning to inquire into the morals of the numerous domestics that depend upon you; through your exaltation to remain ignorant whether they believe in the God whom you adore, or fulfil the duties of the religion which you profess? What confirms you in such unchristian maxims? Does the Gospel of Jesus Christ? Does the doctrine of the saints? Do the laws of the church? For some rule is necessary in order to be safe; what is yours?—Custom. This is all that you have to oppose to us: we see none around us, who do not walk by the same rules; on entering into the world we found these practices established in the world: our fathers conformed to them, and it is from them that we derived them; the most sensible continue to conform to them; we do not possess more wisdom than others; we must adhere to what has been always practised, and not wish to be singular.

It is this that fortifies you against all the terrors of religion. No one consults the law of God: public example is the only warrant for our conduct: we do not consider that “The laws of the people are vain,” as saith the Holy Spirit (Jer. x. 3)—that Jesus Christ has left us rules, which neither circumstances, time, nor varying manners can in the least alter—that the heavens and the earth will pass away—that manners and customs will change; but that these sacred rules will be always the same.

Men satisfy their minds by comparing themselves with those around them: they are not aware, that what we now call customs were monstrous singularities before Christians degenerated in their practices: and that, if corruption has since increased, irregularities have not ceased to be sinful, by losing their singularity. They do not consider that we shall be judged by the Gospel, and not by received customs;

by the examples of the saints, and not by the opinions of men; that the customs which are introduced among the faithful, through the decreasing influence of faith, are abuses that we should lament, and not models which we should copy; that by varying their practices they had not altered their duty; that the general example which countenances them, only proves that virtue is seldom to be found, not that irregularity is allowed; in a word, that piety and a Christian life are too painful to nature ever to become the practice of the majority.

Will you now tell us, that you only follow the example of others? It is on that very account you will be lost. What! shall the most terrible presage of your condemnation become the sole ground of your confidence! Which, according to the Scripture, is the way that leads to death! Is it not that frequented by the many? Which is the party of the reprobate? Is it not that of the multitude? You only follow the example of others! Thus perished, in the days of Noah, all who were overwhelmed with the waters of the deluge; in the time of Nebuchadnezzar, all who prostrated themselves before the statue which he erected; in the time of Elijah, all who bowed the knee to Baal; in the time of Eleazar, all who abandoned the laws of their fathers. You only follow the example of others! That is what the Scriptures forbid: "Be not conformed to this world." (Rom. xii. 2.) Now, the world is not the small number of the righteous whom you do not imitate; it is the multitude whom you follow. You only follow the example of others! You will therefore be exposed to the same doom with them. Now, "Woe to thee," exclaimed St. Augustin, "fatal torrent of human custom! Wilt thou never stop thy course? Wilt thou to the last continue to drag the children of Adam along with thee into the vast and terrible abyss."

Instead of saying to yourself, What are my hopes? there are two ways pointed out to the church: the one broad, and many there be which go therein, and it leadeth

to destruction ; the other narrow, and few there be that find it, and it leadeth to life : to which party do I belong ? Are my manners those which are common to those of my own rank, age, and condition : if I walk with the multitude, I am in the broad way ; I shall be lost : the multitude in each condition is not the party of the saved. Instead of reasoning in this manner, every one says to himself, ' I am not in a worse condition than my neighbours : those of my own age and rank live in this manner, and why should I not live as they do ? ' Why, my dear hearer, for that very reason : the usual way in which persons live is incompatible with the life of a Christian ; the saints have always been singular ; they have been peculiar in their practices, and they have been saints only because they did not resemble others.

Custom had so far prevailed in the age of Ezra as to induce the people to unite themselves, notwithstanding the prohibition, with strange women ; the abuse was general ; the priests and the people made no scruple of the practice. But what was the conduct of that holy restorer of the law ? Did he follow the example of his brethren ? Did he suppose that the frequency of the offence rendered it lawful ? He examined the abuse by the rule : he took the book of the law in his hand : he explained it to the terrified people, and corrected the practice by the truth.

Trace the history of the righteous from age to age : Did Lot conform to the ways of Sodom ? Did nothing distinguish him from his fellow-citizens ? Did Abraham live like those of his own age ? Did Job resemble the other princes of his nation ? Did Esther conduct herself like the other women in the court of Ahasuerus ? Were there many widows of Bethulia, and in Israel, who resembled Judith ? Among the children of the captivity, was it not remarked of Tobit alone that he conformed not to the conduct of his brethren, and that he even fled from the danger of their company and intercourse ? In those

happy ages, in which Christians continued to be saints, did they not shine like stars in the midst of the wicked nations that surrounded them? did they not serve as a spectacle to angels and to men by the singularities of their manners? Did not Pagans reproach them with their seclusion from the world, with their absence from the theatres, the circus, and other places of public amusement? Did they not complain that Christians affected to distinguish themselves in every thing from their fellow-citizens—to form a distinct people in the midst of them—to have their particular laws and customs, and when a man went over to the society of Christians, did they not deem him a man lost to their pleasures, their assemblies and their customs? Finally, see if, in any age, the saints, whose lives and actions have been transmitted to us, resembled other men?

You will perhaps tell us, that these are singularities and exceptions, rather than rules which all men are obliged to follow: they are exceptions, it is true, because the general practice is to go in the way to ruin; and a faithful person in the midst of the world, is always a singularity that is viewed as a prodigy. The whole world, you say, is not obliged to follow such examples: is it because holiness is not the common vocation of the faithful? or because it is not necessary to be holy in order to be saved? Is it because heaven requires great sacrifices from some, and nothing from others? or because you have another Gospel to follow, other duties to fulfil, and different promises to rely upon than the saints? Ah! since there is a more easy way to obtain salvation, ye pious believers, who now enjoy a kingdom in heaven which you obtained only by violence, at the price of your blood and of your labours, why did you leave us such dangerous and useless examples? Why did you make out for us a rough and disagreeable road, so suited to shock our weakness, since there was a more pleasant and beaten path which you might have shewn to us to

encourage and attract us, by facilitating our course? Great God! how little do men consult their reason in the affair of their eternal salvation!

Will you, after this, take encouragement from the conduct of the multitude, as though the number of the criminals could secure wickedness from punishment, and as though God would not dare to destroy all who live like you? But what is the whole human race before God? Did the multitude of the guilty prevent his exterminating all flesh at the deluge, his raining down fire from heaven upon five infamous cities, his overwhelming Pharaoh and all his host in the Red Sea, his striking with death all that murmured in the wilderness? Ah! the kings of the earth may have regard to the number of the guilty, because their punishment becomes impossible, or at least dangerous, when the evil is too general. But God, who shakes the wicked from off the earth, saith Job, as we shake off the dust from a garment—that God before whom nations and people are as if they were not, considers not the number of the culpable; he only regards their crimes; and all that the helpless creature can presume upon from the number of the accomplices in his transgressions is, to have them as companions of his misfortune.

But if few are saved, because those maxims which are the most universally received are sinful, few are saved because the maxims and obligations the most indispensable to salvation are generally unknown and rejected. This is the last reflection, which is only the confirmation and illustration of the preceding.

Part III.—What are the obligations of the holy vocation to which we have been called? The solemn promises of baptism.—What did we promise at our baptism? To renounce the world and the flesh, the devil and all his works. Such are our vows, such the state of the Christian, and the essential conditions of the holy treaty concluded between God and man, by which eternal life is promised.

These truths, you say, appear familiar, and adapted to the simple ; but this is a mistake—none are more sublime, yet none are more unknown : we are obliged incessantly to announce them to the courts of kings, and to the great of the world. “To the kings and princes of the earth.” They are children of light with reference to the world ; but they are, alas ! often more ignorant of the first principles of Christian morals than the simple and vulgar : they need milk, and yet they require us to feed them with strong meat, and to speak to them the language of wisdom, as though we spake among them that were perfect.

First, you have renounced the world at your baptism ; you vowed to do so at the sacred altar : the church has been its guarantee and depositary ; and you have been admitted into the number of the faithful, and marked with the indelible seal of salvation, only upon the faith which you then swore to the Lord not to love the world, nor the things which are loved by the world. If you had then answered at the sacred font what you now daily declare—that you do not find the world so corrupt and injurious as we represent it, that you may innocently love it, that it is only because we are unacquainted with it that we so greatly decry it from the pulpit, and that since you have to live in the world you do not wish to be singular ; ah ! if you had then answered in this manner, the church would have refused to receive you to her bosom, to admit you to a participation in the Christian hope, and to communion with those who have vanquished the world : she would have advised you to seek an abode among those infidels who are ignorant of Jesus Christ, and where the prince of this world being the object of adoration, his subjects are allowed to love that which belongs to him. And this is the reason why, in the primitive times, those catechumens who could not be induced to renounce the world and its pleasures, deferred their baptism until death ; they dared not to contract at the foot of the altar, in the sacrament which regenerates us, obligations with the extent and

sanctity of which they were acquainted, and which they felt themselves not yet in a condition to fulfil. You are therefore bound, by the most sacred oath, to hate the world; that is to say, not to be conformed to it. If you love it, if you follow its pleasures and customs, you are not only the enemies of God, as saith St. John, but you thereby renounce also the faith professed at your baptism; you abjure the Gospel of Jesus Christ; you are an apostate from religion, and trample under foot the most sacred and irrevocable vows which man is capable of making.

Now, what is the world which you are bound to hate? I need only say that it is the world which you love: you will never deceive yourselves by that mark. The world is a society of sinners, whose desires, fears, hopes, cares, projects, joys, and griefs turn only upon the blessings and misfortunes of the present life: the world is a collection of persons who regard the earth as their country, the world to come as a state of exile, the promises of revelation as an illusion, and death as the greatest of all misfortunes: the world is a temporal kingdom, in which Jesus Christ is unknown, in which those who know him do not glorify him as their Lord, but hate him in his maxims, despise him in his servants, persecute him in his works, neglect or insult him in his sacraments and worship: finally, to affix to this word a more definite idea, it is the majority. Such is the world which you ought to avoid, to hate, and to oppose by your example; and you ought to be delighted that it hates you in its turn, and that it contradicts your manners by its own: this is the world which ought to be crucified to you, that is to say, which ought to be to you an anathema, an object of horror, and to which you ought to appear the same.

Now, is this your situation with respect to the world? Are its pleasures a burden to you? Do the scandals it are brought upon it wound your faith? Do you groan under the length of your pilgrimage? Have you no longer any thing in common with the world? Are you not on th

contrary, one of its principal actors ? Are not its laws your own ; its maxims, your maxims ? Do you not condemn what it condemns, and approve what it approves ? And though you were left alone upon the earth, would not this corrupt world revive in you, and would you not leave a model of it to your descendants ? And when I say *you*, I address myself to almost all. Where are those who heartily renounce the pleasures, customs, maxims, and hopes of the world ! All have promised to do so ; but where are those who really do so ? We see many who complain of the world ; who accuse it of injustice, ingratitude, and caprice ; who inveigh bitterly against it, who speak violently of its abuses and errors ; but while they decry, they love, they pursue it, and cannot relinquish it. In complaining of its injustice, they are exasperated ; but they are not undeceived : they experience its ill-treatment, but they are not acquainted with its danger ; they censure it, but where shall we find those who hate it ? Judge from hence whether many can expect salvation.

In the second place, you renounced the flesh at your baptism ; that is to say, you engaged not to live according to sense, but to regard indifference and indecision as a crime ; not to flatter the corrupt desires of the flesh, but to chastise, subdue, and crucify it. This is not a perfection already attained, it is a vow ; it is the chief of your duties, it is the most indispensable characteristic of faith. Now, where are the Christians who, in this respect, are more faithful than yourselves ?

Finally, you have anathematized Satan and his works ; and what are his works ? Those which compose the thread, and, as it were, the whole course of your life ; vanity, public amusements, pleasures, and spectacles ; deceit, of which he is the father ; pride, of which he is the model ; envy and contentions, of which he is the artisan. But I ask you, where are those who have not retracted the anathema which they then pronounced upon Satan ?

And here, by the way, how many questions are resolved !

You continually inquire whether Christians may innocently attend the theatre and other public amusements? I have, in my turn, only one question to propose to you: Are they the works of Satan, or those of Jesus Christ? For there is no middle way in religion. There are, indeed, some relaxations and pleasures which may be called indifferent; but the most indifferent ones which religion allows, and which the weakness of nature even renders necessary, belong in a certain sense to Jesus Christ, as they facilitate our renewed application to more holy and serious duties: every thing that we do, that we lament or rejoice in, ought to be of such a nature that we may at least refer it to Jesus Christ, and do it to his glory.

Now, upon this most incontestable principle, the most generally admitted of all Christian maxims, you have only to decide. Can you refer the pleasures of the theatre to the glory of Jesus Christ? Can he take any part in such amusements? And before you attend upon them, can you tell him that in those things you only design to please and glorify him? What! can such pieces as are performed in our days, and which are more criminal, through the public debauchery of the wretched actors, than by the impure or impassioned things which they recite,—can such spectacles be the works of Jesus Christ? Can He animate the mouth which utters profane and lascivious airs? Can He himself form the pleasing sounds of a voice which corrupts the heart? Can He appear upon the theatre in the person of an actor, or of an impudent actress, characters reckoned infamous even by the laws of men? But such blasphemies excite my horror; shall Jesus Christ preside at the assemblies of the wicked, where all that is heard subverts his doctrine; where the poison enters, through every sense, into the soul; where the whole art tends to inspire, to awaken, and to justify the passions which He condemns? Now, if they are not the works of Jesus Christ in the sense already explained; that is to say, works which may at least be referred to Jesus Christ; they are the works of

Satan, said Tertullian: *Nihil enim non diaboli est, quicquid non Dei est . . . hoc ergo erit pompa diaboli.* Every Christian ought therefore to abstain from them, as he cannot join in them without violating the vows made at his baptism; for however he may flatter himself that he returns from these pleasures perfectly innocent, with his mind free from any sinful impression, he leaves them defiled; since he has, by his presence, participated in the works of Satan, which he renounced at his baptism; and he has thereby violated the most sacred promises which he had made to Jesus Christ and to his church.

Such, my brethren, are our baptismal vows. That these are not mere counsels and practices, I have already informed you: they are our most important obligations. The question is not, therefore, whether we are more or less perfect by neglecting or observing them; but whether we are Christians or not. Yet who observes them? Who is even acquainted with them? Who thinks of coming to the tribunal to confess such infidelities? You are at a loss to find wherewith to make up a confession; and after a life wholly devoted to the world, you have scarcely any thing to acknowledge to the priest. Alas! my brethren, if you knew to what the title of a Christian, which you bear, engaged you: if you understood the sanctity of your state, the weanedness from every creature, which it imposes; the hatred of the world, of yourselves, and of every thing which is not God, which it prescribes; the life of faith, the constant vigilance and restraint upon the senses; in a word, the conformity to Christ crucified, which it demands; if you understood this, if you considered that, being bound to love God with all your heart, and with all your strength, a single desire that cannot be referred to him defiles you; if you understood this, you would consider yourselves monsters in his sight. What! would you relate such sacred obligations, and such profane practices? a vigilance required to be so constant, and a life so careless and dissipated? So pure, so perfect, so universal a love of God,

and a heart a continual prey to a thousand either foreign or criminal affections? If it is thus, O my God! who then can be saved? Very few, my dear hearer: at least it will not be you, except you repent; it will not be those who resemble you; it will not be the multitude.

Who then can be saved? Do you wish to know? It will be those who work out their salvation with fear and trembling; who live in the midst of the world, but do not conform to the world.—Who then can be saved? That Christian mother, who, wholly taken up in the bosom of her domestic duties, brings up her children in faith and piety; who leaves the decision of their present calling to the Lord; and divides her heart between Jesus Christ and her spouse; who, adorned with shamefacedness and modesty, neither sits in assemblies of vanity, nor makes a law of the foolish customs of the world, but corrects them by the law of God, and honours virtue by her rank and example.

Who then can be saved? That believer, who, in the general declension of these last times, imitates the manners of the primitive Christians; who possesses “clean hands and a pure heart;” who is *vigilant*, “who has not received his soul in vain,” but who, even in the very midst of the perils of the world, continually applies himself to its sanctification. *Just*, “who sweareth not falsely to his neighbour,” nor owes to suspicious means the increase of his fortune. *Generous*, who loads with benefits the enemy that wished to destroy him, and injures his rival only by his merit. *Sincere*, who neither sacrifices truth to a base self-interest, nor is acquainted with the art of pleasing at the expense of his conscience. *Charitable*, who makes his house and influence the asylum of his brethren, his presence the consolation of the afflicted, his wealth the property of the poor. Submissive in affliction, meek under injuries, and penitent in prosperity.

Who then can be saved? You, my dear hearer, if you will follow these examples: such are the persons who will be saved. Now, such certainly do not compose the

jority. While therefore you live like the multitude, you ought not, on scriptural grounds, to expect salvation: because if by living thus you could be saved, most men would be saved; since there is only a small number so wicked as to give up themselves to monstrous excesses; all the rest only live as you do: now, that nearly all men will be saved, revelation forbids us to believe: you ought not, therefore, from that source to indulge the least hope of salvation, since you cannot be saved if the many are not saved.

These are alarming truths, which make us tremble; they are not those general declarations which are addressed to all men, and which no one applies to himself. There is not perhaps a single individual here present who may not say of himself, 'I live like the majority, like those of my own age and rank; I shall be lost, if I pursue my present course of life.' Now, what is more suited to alarm a person who still feels the least solicitude about his salvation? Yet this does not affect the multitude; it is only the small number of the righteous who work out their salvation with fear and trembling; all the rest live at ease: we know in general that the many will be condemned; but we flatter ourselves, that, after having lived like the multitude, we shall be happily distinguished from them at death; every one puts himself in the case of a chimerical exception; each one augurs favourably in his own behalf.

It is on this account, my brethren, that I confine myself to you who are here assembled: I do not now speak of the rest of mankind; I regard you as if you were the only persons upon the earth: and this is the thought that terrifies me. I suppose this to be your last hour and the consummation of all things—that the heavens are about to open over your heads, and Jesus Christ to appear in his glory in the midst of this temple—that you, as trembling criminals, are assembled only to await his approach, and that either an act of grace is about to pass in your favour, or a sentence of eternal death to be pro-

nounced upon you : for in vain do you flatter yourselves, you will die such as you are this day ; all those desires of amendment which amuse you will continue to do so, it is probable, till your dying bed. This is the experience of all ages : all that you will then find new in you, will perhaps be a little longer account than what you would have to give up at this day ; and from what you would be, if you were judged this very moment, you may decide, almost with certainty, what your state will be when you leave the present world.

Now, I ask, and I make the inquiry, struck with terror, and not, in this respect, separating myself from you, but putting myself into the same disposition as that in which I wish you to be found : I ask therefore, If Jesus Christ should now appear in this temple, in the midst of this assembly, the most august in the world, to pass judgment upon us and to make the appalling separation between the sheep and the goats, do you think that the greatest part of those that are here present would be placed at his right hand ? Do you think that the numbers would even be equal ? Do you think that there would be found ten righteous persons, when the Lord could not find that number formerly in five whole cities ? I inquire, but you know not, neither do I know : Thou only, O my God ! knowest them that are Thine ; but if we know not those that belong to him, we at least know that sinners do not. Now, which are the faithful in this assembly ? Titles and dignities must be reckoned for nothing ; you will be stripped of them all when you appear before Jesus Christ. Which are they ? The party of the reprobate consists of many sinners, who will not be converted ; still more who desire to be so, but defer it ; many others who never repent except to relapse into wickedness ; and a great number who think they do not need repentance. Remove, therefore, these four descriptions of sinners from this sacred assembly ; for they will be taken away at the great day. Now, ye righteous, come forward—Where are ye ? Remnant of Israel, pass

over to the right : Ye that are the **wheat of Jesus Christ**, get clear away from the **chaff** destined for the fire : O God ! Where are Thine elect, and **what** remains for Thy portion ?

My brethren, our perdition is almost certain ; yet it does not engage our thoughts. Though in the terrible separation, which will one day take place, there were to be only one of the sinners in this assembly on the side of the reprobate, and that a voice from heaven were now to give us this assurance without pointing out the individual, is there one of us who would not fear that he should be the unhappy creature ?—one, who would not again immediately look into his conscience, to examine whether his crimes had not merited that punishment ? Seized with terror, would not each one inquire of Jesus Christ as the Apostles formerly did, “ Lord, is it I ? ” And if any delay were allowed, who would not put himself into a condition to avert the calamity, by the tears and groans of sincere repentance.

Do we act wisely, my dear hearers ? Perhaps of all who now hear me, scarcely ten righteous would be found ; perhaps, not even so many : who can tell ? I dare not, O my God ! regard with a fixed eye the depths of thy justice and judgments ; perhaps only one would be found ; yet this danger, my dear hearer, no way affects you ! and you think yourself the only happy person among the vast multitude who will perish,—*you*, who have less reason than every other person to think so ;—*you*, upon whom alone the sentence of death ought to fall, provided it fell only upon one of the sinners who now hears me ?

Great God ! how little are the terrors of Thy law known in the world ! The righteous of every age have been consumed with terror, while they have meditated upon the strictness and the awfulness of thy judgments concerning the destiny of men : we have seen solitary saints, after a life spent in penitence, struck with the truth which I preach, seized on their dying bed with ter

rors which could hardly be calmed, making their hard and miserable couches shake beneath them, continually saying to their brethren with their dying breath: 'Do you think that the Lord will have mercy upon me?' and on the very point of sinking into despair, if Thy presence, O my God! had not in the very moment appeased the storm, and once more commanded the winds and the sea to be still: and *now*, at the present day, after a common, worldly, sensual and profane life, every one dies tranquil; and the minister of Christ, on being sent for, is obliged to cherish the false confidence of the dying, to speak to him only of the infinite treasures of Divine mercy, and thus to assist him to deceive himself. O God! What then does the strictness of Thy justice prepare for the children of Adam?

But what must we conclude from these solemn truths? That we are to despair of salvation? God forbid; it is only the hardened sinner, who, to quiet himself in his irregularities, endeavours secretly to conclude from hence that all will perish in like manner with himself: this ought not to be the fruit of this discourse; but to undeceive you respecting that common error, that we may safely follow the example of others, and to convince you that to be saved you must be distinguished from others and be singular—live apart in the midst of the world, and not resemble the crowd.

When the Jews who had been made captives were on the point of leaving Judea and of proceeding for Babylon, the prophet Jeremiah, whom the Lord commanded to abide at Jerusalem, addressed them thus: Children of Israel, when you arrive at Babylon, you will see the inhabitants of that country carrying gods of gold and silver upon their shoulders; all the people will prostrate themselves in adoration before them: then, instead of suffering yourselves to be drawn aside by those wicked examples, *secretly* say to yourselves, "Thou art to be worshipped, O Lord."

Permit me to conclude by addressing you in the same words. On leaving this temple, this other sacred Zion, you are about to enter Babylon; you are about to behold those idols of gold and silver which all men worship; you will again find the objects of human passions, the blessings, the glory, and the pleasures which are the gods of this world, and which almost all men adore; you will behold those sinful practices which all the world tolerates, those errors which custom authorizes, those disorders which a sinful usage has almost enacted into a law. Then, my dear hearer, if you wish to be of the small number of true Israelites, say in the secret of thine heart,—It is thou only, O my God, which must be adored; I will have no part with a people who know thee not; I will never have any other law than thine. The gods which are worshipped by the foolish multitude are not gods; they are the work of men's hands, and they will perish together with them. Thou only art immortal, O my God, and thou only art worthy to be adored. The customs of Babylon have nothing in common with the holy laws of Jerusalem. I will adore thee with that small number of the children of Abraham who still compose thy people in the midst of an unbelieving nation: I will with them turn all my desires towards thy holy Zion: they will treat the peculiarity of my manners as a weakness; but how happy the weakness, O Lord, which shall give me strength to resist the torrent and the seducing influence of example! and thou shalt be my God, in the midst of Babylon, as thou shalt be one day in the holy Jerusalem: "Thou art to be worshipped, O Lord." Ah! the time of captivity will at length terminate: thou wilt remember Abraham and David; thou wilt deliver thy people; thou wilt bring us back to the holy city, and then thou alone wilt reign over Israel, and over the nations which know thee not: then, every thing being destroyed, all the empires, sceptres, and monuments of human pride being annihilated, thou alone wilt remain for ever, and

it shall be known that thou alone art to be worshipped,
O Lord.

Such is the fruit which you ought to derive from this discourse: live apart, incessantly consider that the many expose themselves to damnation, pay no regard to those customs which the law of God does not authorize, and remember that the saints have been in every age a peculiar people. It is thus, after having been distinguished upon earth, you will be gloriously separated in eternity. Amen.

SERMON XII.

ON DEATH.

LUKE viii. 12.

Now when He came to the gate of the city, behold there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother.

WAS death ever accompanied with more affecting circumstances? It is an only son, the sole heir to the name, the titles, and the fortune, of his ancestors, which death snatches away from a widowed and desolate mother: it tears him from her in the flower of his age, and almost at his entrance into life; at a time when, having escaped the dangers of infancy, and arrived at the first degree of strength and reason, which constitutes manhood, he appeared the least exposed to the surprise of death, and maternal affection had at length time to respire after all the alarms which accompanied the uncertain progress of his education. The citizens run in crowds to mingle their tears with those of this disconsolate mother: assiduous by her side, they seek to alleviate her grief, to console her by those vague and common topics to which profound grief never attends; they with her surround the sad bier; they adorn the obsequies with their presence and lamentations. This procession of funereal pomp is to them a spectacle: but is it a mean of instruction? They are struck, they are affected; but are they less attached to life? and is not the remembrance of this death about to be forgotten with the noise and pomp of the funeral ceremonies?

To similar examples, my brethren, we daily carry the same dispositions. The sentiments which a sudden death

awakens in our breasts, remain but for a day, as though death itself were merely the affair of a day. We exhaust ourselves in vain reflexions upon the instability of all human things; but when the objects which strike us, have disappeared, the mind, again become tranquil, remains the same: and at leaving a funeral spectacle in which we have sometimes seen birth, youth, titles, and reputation, all dissolved and buried for ever in the tomb, we return to the world, more anxious and eager than ever to obtain all those vain objects, the emptiness and nothingness of which we have just seen with our own eyes, and almost touched with our hands.

Let us therefore seek at présent the cause of so lamentable an error. How is it that men think so little about death, and that this thought makes so transient an impression upon them? It is this:—the *uncertainty* of death amuses us, and effaces the remembrance of it from our minds—the *certainly* of death, affrights us, and obliges us to turn our eyes from so mournful an image: its *uncertainty* lulls us to sleep, and confirms us; its *terribleness* and *certainly* make us dread the thoughts of it. Now I wish this day to oppose the dangerous security of some and the unreasonable fears of others. Death is *uncertain*; it is therefore temerity to put off the thought of it, and to suffer yourselves to be surprised: death is *certain*; you are therefore foolish to fear its remembrance, for you ought never to lose sight of it. Think upon death, as you *know not* at what hour it will happen; think upon death, as it *will certainly come*: this is the subject of our discourse. Let us pray, &c.

Part I.—The first step which man takes in life is also the first which advances him towards the tomb: as soon as his eyes open to the light, the sentence of death is pronounced upon him; and as if it were a crime for him to live, it suffices that he lives to be deserving of death. This was not our original destiny: the Author of our

being at first animated our dust with an immortal breath: He placed a germ of life within us, which the revolution of seasons and of years could neither have weakened nor have extinguished: his work was contrived with so much order, that it might have defied eternal ages, and nothing foreign could ever have destroyed, or even have disturbed its harmony. Sin alone dried up this Divine life—overtaken this happy order—armed every creature against man; and Adam became mortal, as soon as he became a sinner: it is by sin, said the Apostle, that death entered into the world.

We all at our birth bear the seeds of death in our bosom. It would seem that we derived from our mother's womb a slow poison, which causes us to languish here below; some for a longer and others for a shorter period, but which always terminates in death. We die daily; every moment robs us of a portion of our existence, and advances us a step towards the tomb: the body decays, the health declines, every thing which surrounds us contributes to destroy us; food corrupts, and remedies enfeeble us; the spiritual fire which inwardly animates, consumes us; and our whole life is only a painful and protracted agony. Now, in this situation, what image ought to be more familiar to man, than that of death? Can a condemned criminal, wherever he turns his eyes, discern any other object? And does the longer or shorter period which we have to live, constitute a difference sufficiently great, to lead us to regard ourselves as immortal upon the earth?

The period of our existence is, it is true, different: some see the number of their years increase in peace, even to the most advanced age; and, inheriting the benediction of ancient times, they die full of days, in the midst of a numerous posterity: others, like king Hezekiah, arrested in the midst of their course, see the gate of the tomb opening to them while still in the prime of life; and, like him, they seek in vain for the residue of their years: finally, there are some which only just appear upon the

earth; they finish the course begun in the morning before the evening; and like the flowers of the field, they scarcely know any interval between the moment which sees them open, and that which sees them wither and die. The fatal moment fixed to each is a secret written in the eternal volume which only the Lamb has a right to open. We all live uncertain of the number of our days; and that uncertainty, so suited to render us attentive to that last hour, lulls us to sleep. We do not think of death, because we know not at what period to place it. We do not even regard old age as its certain and inevitable limit: the uncertainty whether we shall attain to it, which ought to limit our hopes to this side of it, causes us to expect life even beyond that period. Our fear not being able to fix upon any certain period, becomes no more than a vague and confused idea, which renders it as nothing; so that the uncertainty which ought to relate only to the exact time of our death makes us easy with respect to death itself.

I say then, my brethren, that of all our dispositions this is the most rash and imprudent. I appeal to yourselves, is a misfortune, which may happen every day, more to be despised than another which only threatens you at the end of a certain number of years? What! because your soul may be required every moment, will you possess it in peace, as if you were never to yield it up? Is attention less necessary because the danger is continually present? And in what affair, besides that relating to salvation, does uncertainty itself become a cause of security and of negligence? Does the conduct of the servant, mentioned in the Gospel, appear very prudent, who, under the pretence that his master delayed his return, and that he knew not the hour of his arrival, wasted his property, as if he had no account to render? What other motive did Jesus Christ employ to induce us to watch without ceasing; and what is there in religion more suited to awaken our vigilance, than the uncertainty of our last day?

Ah ! my brethren, if the hour were marked out to each of us ; if the kingdom of God came with observation ; if at our birth we bore written upon our foreheads the number of our years and the fatal day on which they would terminate, that fixed certain period, however distant it might be, would occupy our minds, would distress us, and leave us without an easy moment : we should always consider the interval too short which we should see before us : this image, continually present to our minds, would, in spite of ourselves, excite an aversion to every thing ; would render pleasures insipid, fortune indifferent, and the whole world burdensome and fatiguing : that terrible moment, of which we could never lose sight, would repress our passions, extinguish our enmities, disarm our revenge, and quell the rebellion of the flesh ; it would mingle with all our projects ; and our life, thus determined to a certain number of days fixed and known, would be only a preparation for that last moment. Are we wise, my brethren ? Death, seen at a distance, at a certain and marked point, would frighten us, would detach us from the world, and from ourselves, would recal us to God, would incessantly engage our thoughts ; and yet this same death from its being uncertain, though it may happen every day, every moment—this death which will surprise us, which will come when we least expect it, which may be now at the door,—in no way occupies our thoughts, but leaves us tranquil and at ease : what do I say ? leaves us all our evil passions, all our criminal attachments, and all our vivacity for the world, for pleasure, and for fortune ; and because it is uncertain whether we may not die this very day, we live as if our years were never to terminate.

Remark here, my brethren, that this uncertainty is accompanied with all the circumstances the most capable of alarming, or at least of engaging the mind of a wise man, who makes use of his reason. First, the surprise of this last day, which you have to fear, is not one of those rare and singular accidents which fall only upon certain unhappy

persons, and which it is more prudent to despise than to foresee. The question here is, not whether death may surprise you, whether the lightning may strike you, whether you may be buried under the ruins of your palaces, whether a shipwreck may plunge you into the deep, nor respecting so many other misfortunes which their singularity renders more terrible, and yet less to be feared : it is a common misfortune, of which there is not a day that does not furnish us with examples. Most men are surprised by death : all have seen it approach, when they thought it still distant : every one said to himself, like the fool in the Gospel, "Soul, take thine ease, thou hast goods laid up in store for many years." Thus died your neighbours, your friends, and almost all whose death you have witnessed : all have left you astonished at the suddenness of their death. You have sought for the cause, in the imprudence of the sick person, or in the improper choice of remedies ; but the best and the only one is this, that the day of the Lord always surprises us. The earth is like a vast field of battle, on which we are daily engaged with the enemy : to-day you have fortunately escaped ; but you have seen others perish, who also flattered themselves that they should come off safe : to-morrow you must again enter the lists, and who has told you that the lot, so capricious towards others, will continue always favourable to you ? And since you must eventually perish, are you wise in building a firm and permanent dwelling on the very place, perhaps, destined to serve for your sepulchre ? Imagine yourselves in what situation you please, there is not a moment which may not be your last, and which you have not seen to be the last to some of your brethren. There is no glorious action which may not be terminated by the eternal darkness of the tomb : Herod was struck in the midst of the foolish plaudits of his people. There is not a public day which may not be concluded by your funereal obsequies ; Jezebel was killed on the very day that she had chosen to shew

herself in extraordinary pomp and ostentation at the window of her palace. There is no delicious banquet which may not prove to you a deadly poison ; Belshazzar expires while seated around a sumptuous table : no sleep which may not consign you to an eternal sleep ; Holofernes, the conqueror of provinces and kingdoms, expires in the midst of his army by the sword of an Israelitish woman : no crime which may not put an end to all our sins ; Zimri finds an inglorious death in the tents of the daughters of Midian : no malady which may not be the fatal termination of our days ; you daily see the slightest infirmities deceive the conjectures of art, and the expectations of the afflicted, and suddenly terminate in death. In a word, imagine yourselves in any circumstance of life in which you can possibly be found, and you can scarcely enumerate the number who have been surprised therein : and nothing can secure you from being thus surprised yourselves. You acknowledge, you admit it ; yet this alarming avowal is no more than a customary speech, which never leads you to take a single precaution, that may secure you from danger.

Secondly, If this uncertainty turned only upon the hour, the place, or the manner of your death, it would not appear so dreadful : for what does it concern the Christian, said St. Augustin, whether he die in the midst of his neighbours or in a foreign land—on a bed of affliction, or in the bosom of the deep, provided he die piously and righteously. But that which is terrible here, is this, that it is uncertain whether you will die in the Lord, or in your sins—that you are ignorant what you shall be in that other world, in which the state of every man will remain unalterable ; into whose hands your solitary and trembling soul will fall at its leaving the body ; whether it will be surrounded with light, and carried to the foot of the Throne upon the wings of happy spirits, or be precipitated with a dreadful crowd into the terrific abyss : you are now be

tween these two eternities. You know not to which of the two you belong : death alone will reveal this secret to you ! Ah, my brethren ! If every thing were to terminate with us, the infidel would still be in the wrong to say, ' Let us not think of our latter end ; let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die : ' the greater the sweetness he finds in life, the greater reason would he have to fear death, which, however, would only be to him an entire cessation of existence. But for us to whom revelation discloses eternal rewards and punishments beyond the grave—for us who must meet death in uncertainty respecting this terrible alternative, is it not the height of folly, what do I say ? is it not madness, to hold the same language as the infidel, " Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die ; " and to live as if we thought like him ? Ah ! can we be a single instant without thinking of that decisive moment, and without alleviating, by the precautions to which revelation directs us, that distress and fear which this uncertainty may excite in a mind that has not wholly renounced its eternal hopes.

Thirdly, In every other uncertainty, either the number exposed to the same danger may encourage us, or the resources with which we flatter ourselves may leave us more tranquil ; or lastly, at the very worst, the error is only a lesson which teaches us, to our cost, to be more upon our guard for the future. But in the terrible uncertainty in question, my brethren, the number of those who run the same risk with ourselves does not in the least diminish ours : all the resources with which we flatter ourselves on a death-bed are commonly illusions ; and religion itself, which furnishes them, scarcely allows a hope. The mistake is without remedy : we die but once, and we cannot turn our imprudence to advantage upon a future occasion. Our misfortune undeceives us, it is true ; but the increased knowledge which dispels our error, becoming useless by the immutability of our state, is only a cruel conviction which will eternally torment us, and make it the grievous subject

of our punishment rather than a wise reflection which might lead us to repentance.

Upon what ground, therefore, can you justify that strange and incomprehensible forgetfulness in which you live respecting your latter end? Upon your *youth*, which seems still to promise you a long course of years? Upon youth! The son of the widow of Nain was young: does death respect age or rank? Upon youth! This is the very thing which makes me dread your being led into licentious practices, excessive pleasures, extravagant passions, the luxuries of the table, the transports of ambition, the dangers of war, the desire of glory, or the sallies of revenge. Is it not at that gay period of life that most men finish their course? Adonijah might have grown old, if he had not been voluptuous; so also might Absalom, if he had been free from ambition; and the son of the king of Sichem, if he had not loved Dinah; or Jonathan, if glory had not prepared for him a grave upon the mountains of Gilboa. Upon youth! But must we here renew the grief of the nation, and augment the tears that have not yet ceased to flow? Must we irritate the wound which will long continue to bleed in the heart of a great prince who is now before us? A young princess, the delight of the court; a young prince, the hope of the state; even the infant, the precious fruit of their affection and of the public wishes—has not cruel death just mown them all down together in the twinkling of an eye? And is not that august palace which was but a few days since filled with glory, majesty, and magnificence, now become a house of perpetual mourning and sadness? Youth! how happy would France have been, could it have depended upon that resource! Alas, it is the season of peril, and it is the most common and dangerous snare of life.

Upon what therefore do you still place your dependence? The *strength of your constitution*? But what is the most confirmed health? A spark which is extinguished by a breath: a single day's sickness is sufficient to destroy the

firmest constitution. I do not, after this, ask whether you do not even flatter yourselves thereupon—whether a constitution broken by the disorders of early years, does not inwardly announce to you a sentence of death—whether habitual infirmities do not open to you at least a distant prospect of the gates of death—whether sad probabilities do not menace you with a sudden accident? I wish you may prolong your days even beyond your hopes. Alas! can that, my brethren, which must terminate appear long to you? Look back; where are your early years? What reality have they left in your remembrance? Nothing more than a dream of the night. You dreamed that you had lived—this is all that remains of them: the interval which has elapsed from the time of your birth to the present day is like a fleeting arrow, which you scarcely perceived as it darted through the air. When you shall have begun to live with the world, the past will appear to you neither longer nor more real: all the ages which have glided away, even to our time, you will regard only as fleeting moments: all the nations which have appeared and disappeared in the universe; all the revolutions of empires and kingdoms; all those great events which adorn our histories, will be to you only like the different scenes of a spectacle which you have seen completed in a day. Recollect the victories, the sieges, the glorious treaties, the great and pompous events which took place at the beginning of the present reign; you are still near them; you have most of you not only witnessed, but been sharers in, their perils and glory: they will be transmitted in our annals to the latest posterity; but to you, they are already no more than a dream, than a flash of lightning which has disappeared, and which every day becomes more effaced from your memories. What then is the short distance which remains for you to pursue? Do we suppose that future days will possess more reality than the past? Years appear long when they are still distant: when arrived they disappear; they evade us in a moment; and before we can scarcely turn our heads, we

find ourselves brought, as by enchantment, to the fatal period which appeared to us so very distant, and which we supposed would never arrive. Compare the world as you saw it in your youth, with what you see it at this day: a new court has succeeded to that which you then beheld; new personages have come forward upon the stage: the chief parts are filled up with new actors: new events, new intrigues, new passions, and new heroes, in virtue as well as in vice, are the subjects of public praise, censure, or derision: a new world has insensibly arisen, and without our perceiving it, upon the ruins of the former: every thing passes away together with yourselves: a rapidity which nothing can stop, bears every thing along with it into the abyss of eternity: our ancestors lately gave place to us, and we shall soon give place to those who are to succeed us. Ages will be renewed, but the fashion of the world continually passes away; the living are continually replacing and succeeding to the dead; nothing remains the same: every thing changes; every thing around us wastes and expires: God alone remains always the same. The torrent of ages, which hurries all men along with it, rolls on before his eyes; and He views those feeble mortals with indignation, who, borne along by the resistless stream of time, insult him as they pass; wishing, in that fleeting moment, to enjoy all their happiness, and on leaving it to fall under his wrath and vengeance. Where now are the wise, saith the Apostle? And if a man were capable of swaying the sceptre of the world, could he merit that appellation when he can so easily forget both what he is and what he ought to be.

Yet what impression, my brethren, does the instability of every thing that takes place in this world make upon us—the death of our neighbours, our friends, our rivals, and our sovereigns? We do not suppose that we are shortly to follow them; we only think of arraying ourselves in their spoils: we think not of the short period during which they enjoyed them; we think only of the pleasure which they

had in possessing them ; we hasten to take advantage of each other's ruin. We resemble inconsiderate soldiers, who, in the midst of the battle, and while their companions are falling around them on every side, by the fire and sword of their enemies, eagerly load themselves with their garments ; and scarcely are they invested with them, ere a mortal blow takes away, together with their lives, the worthless decorations with which they had just adorned themselves. Thus the son invests himself with the spoil of the father, closes his eyes, succeeds to his rank, his fortune, and his dignities ; makes arrangements for the last funeral rites, and retires more occupied and affected with the new titles with which he is invested, than improved by the last advice of a dying parent, or than grieved at his loss, or, at least, than undeceived respecting present things by a spectacle which places their nothingness before his eyes, and which loudly announces to him the same destiny. The death of those who surround us, does not prove a more useful lesson to us : one leaves a vacant post, and you hasten to apply for it ; the death of another advances you one degree higher in the public service : the death of *this* man terminates the claims which would have stood opposed to your promotion ; the decease of *that* man leaves you the ear and the favour of the sovereign, as he was the only one who could dispute it with you : finally, the departure of another brings you near to a dignity, and opens to you the way to an elevated station to which you could have had no pretension during his life, and you are animated to take new steps, and to engage in new projects ; and instead of being undeceived by the fate of those whom you have seen removed, it is from their very ashes that the fatal sparks arise, which rekindle all your desires, and all your attachments, to the world ; and death, that sad image of our misery—death revives more passions among men, than even all the illusions of life. What therefore can sever our affections from this miserable world, since death

itself serves only to rivet our fetters, and to confirm us in the error which attaches us to it ?

Here, my brethren, I only ask you to be reasonable. What are the natural consequences, which good sense alone should teach you to derive from the uncertainty of death ?

First, The hour of death is uncertain ; each year, each day, each moment may be the last of our life : it is therefore foolish to attach ourselves to any thing that may pass away in a moment, and to lose by that means the sole good which will endure for ever ; and all that you do solely for this world ought to appear to be lost, since you possess nothing, can depend upon nothing, and can carry nothing away with you except what you do for heaven : therefore the kingdoms of this world and all their glory ought not for a moment to be put in competition with the interests of your eternal state, since a great fortune does not insure you a greater length of days than a moderate one ; and the sole advantage which you can derive from its present possession is a more bitter anguish, when, at your death-bed, it must be relinquished for ever : therefore all your cares, all your pursuits, and all your desires, ought to unite in seeking an enduring fortune, an eternal happiness, of which no one can ever deprive you.

Secondly, The hour of your death is uncertain : therefore you ought to die daily ; not to allow yourselves a single action in which you would be unwilling to be surprised ; to regard all your steps, as those of a dying man who expects his soul every moment to be required of him ; to do all your works, as if you were that very moment about to give up your account ; and, since you cannot answer for the time to come, so to regulate the present that you may not require the future to amend it.

Finally, The hour of your death is uncertain : therefore defer not your repentance : delay not to return to the Lord. Time is pressing ; you cannot even ensure a single day,

and yet you refer the doing so to a distant and uncertain hereafter. If you had unwittingly swallowed a deadly poison, would you defer to a distant period the only remedy which could counteract its deadly tendency? Would the death which you bore in your bosom permit suspense and delay? Such is your condition. If you are wise, adopt your precautions this very moment: you bear death in your bosom, since you bear sin in it: hasten to remove it. Every moment is precious to him who cannot be sure of the next. The poison which infects you, must soon terminate your life: the goodness of God still offers you the remedy: hasten, I again say, to use it, while time is allowed you. Are exhortations necessary to determine you? Ought it not to be sufficient that we shew you the benefit of the cure? Is it necessary to exhort an unfortunate person, hurried along by the waves, to use every effort to secure himself from being engulfed therein? Ought you in this respect to need our assistance? You approach your last hour: you are, in the twinkling of an eye, about to appear before the tribunal of God: you may usefully employ the moment that is left to you. Nearly all who die daily before your eyes suffer it to escape them, and die without having improved it: you imitate their negligence; the same surprise awaits you: you die like them before you have begun to amend your life. It was announced to them, and we announce it to you: their misery leaves you unaffected, and the unfortunate lot which awaits you will not more affect those to whom we shall one day declare it. It is a hereditary blindness, which passes from the fathers to the children, and which is perpetuated upon the earth: we all wish to live better, but we all die before we have done so.

Such, my brethren, are the wise and natural reflections to which the uncertainty of our last hour ought to lead us. But if, on account of this uncertainty, you are so thoughtless as not to be more concerned about it, than if it were never to happen; there is something in its certainty so

terrible and alarming, that still less excuses your folly, in dismissing this sad image from your mind, as if it were capable of poisoning all the repose and all the sweetness of your life. This is what now remains for me to set before you.

Part II.—Man does not like to think of his nothingness and meanness: every thing which reminds him of his origin, reminds him of his end, wounds his pride, touches his love of life, attacks all his passions in their source, and produces in him sad and dismal thoughts. To die—to leave every thing which surrounds us—to enter into the abyss of eternity—to become a carcase, the food of worms, the abhorrence of men, the horrible tenant of a tomb, that spectacle alone engages all the senses, disturbs reason, darkens the imagination, and poisons all the pleasures of life: we dare not steadily behold so dreadful an image; we dismiss this most sad and distressing thought; we fear every thing that recalls its remembrance; we flee from it, as if it would hasten our last hour. Out of tenderness, we do not even wish a word to be said respecting those dear persons which death has taken from us: we endeavour to conceal from our observation the places which they inhabited, the paintings in which their features still live; in short, every thing which may awaken, with their image, the image of death which has taken them from us. What do I say? We fear mournful recitals: we carry our fears in this respect, even to the most childish superstitions; we think we every where see the unhappy passages of our own death, in the reveries of a dream, in the nocturnal song of a bird, in the fortuitous number of the guests, and in still more ridiculous events: we think that we every where perceive it, and it is on that very account that we endeavour to keep it out of our sight.

Now, my brethren, these extravagant fears were excusable in Pagans to whom death was the worst misfortune, since they expected nothing beyond the tomb; and as

they lived without hope, they died without consolation. But it is surprising that death should be so terrible to Christians, and that the terror of this image should even serve them for an excuse to remove it from their thoughts.

For, in the first place, I admit, that you have cause to dread that last hour; but as it is certain, its appearing terrible is no reason, I conceive, why you ought not to think of it and to prepare for it: on the contrary, it seems to me that the more dreadful the misfortune with which you are threatened, the more you ought to keep it in view, and incessantly to take steps that it may not surprise you. What! in proportion as the danger strikes and terrifies you, shall it render you more indolent and inattentive? Shall the extravagant terrors of your imagination free you even of that prudent fear which worketh salvation? And because your fear is excessive, will you dismiss all reflection? But where is the man that a too lively idea of danger calms and confirms? What! if it were necessary to walk by a narrow and steep path, surrounded on every side with precipices, would you command a bandage to be put before your eyes lest you should see your danger, and lest the depth of the abyss should render you giddy? Ah! my dear hearer, you see your tomb lie open at your feet. That dreadful object alarms you; and instead of taking all the precautions which religion affords that you may not unexpectedly fall into that gulph, you place the covering before your eyes that you may not see it; you engage in cheerful diversions, to efface the idea from your minds; and, like those unfortunate victims of Paganism, you run to the funeral pile with a bandage before your eyes, crowned with flowers, and surrounded with dancing and joyful acclamations, that you may not think of the fatal termination to which this preparation conducts you, and for fear of seeing the altar, that is to say, the death-bed, on which, in a moment, you are about to be sacrificed.

Moreover, if by putting off that thought you could also put off death, your fears would at least admit of an apology.

But whether you think of it or not, death is continually advancing: every effort which you make to diminish the remembrance of it, brings you nearer to it; and at the appointed hour it will assuredly arrive. What do you gain therefore by averting your mind from this thought? Do you lessen your danger? No; you only increase it, and render surprise inevitable. Do you alleviate the horror of that spectacle by concealing it? Ah! you leave it mixed with every thing that is most dreadful. If you rendered the thought of death more familiar, your weak and timorous minds would insensibly be reconciled to it; you might, by degrees, fix your eyes on it, and confront it, on a death-bed, without dismay, or at least with resignation: it would not then be to you a new spectacle. A danger far from a distance has nothing to affright: death is formidable only when we begin to think of it, and is to be feared only when it is not foreseen.

But besides, although this thought should distress you, or should make sad and fearful impressions upon you, what would be the inconvenience? Are you placed upon the earth only to live in an indolent calm, and to occupy yourselves only with pleasing and amusing pursuits? Will you should lose our reason, you say, if we seriously thought of it. You would lose your reason, you say? Did the true believers, who mingled this thought with all their actions, and who made the remembrance of that last hour restrain upon their passions, and the most powerful motive to fidelity—did the numerous illustrious penitents, who set themselves up in tombs, that they might not lose sight of the image of death—did the saints who died daily, as the Apostle saith, that they might not die eternally, lose their reason? You would lose your reason, you say? That is to say, you would regard the world as a place of vain pleasures as an intoxication; sin as the greatest evil; places, honours, favour, and fortune, as dreams; and as the great and sole concern: is this to lose reason? Happy folly! And why are you not free from this

number of these foolish sages! You would lose your reason? Yes, that deceitful, worldly, proud, carnal, and foolish reason which seduces you—yes, that depraved reason, which obscures the faith and justifies the passions, which leads you to prefer time to eternity, to take the shadow for the truth, and which thus deceives all men—yes, that lamentable reason, that vain philosophy, which considers it a weakness to fear a hereafter, and which, because it too much fears it, either pretends, or forces itself to disbelieve it. But that wise, clear, moderate, and Christian reason—that prudence of the serpent, so much recommended in the Gospel, is to be found in this remembrance; but that wisdom which is preferable, saith the Holy Spirit, to all the treasures and honours of this world—that wisdom that is so honourable to man, and which exalts him so much above himself—that wisdom which has made so many Christian heroes, is the ever-present image of your last hour which would adorn your souls. But to be incessantly occupied with the thoughts of death, you say, would only have the effect of leading us to abandon every thing, and to take violent and desperate resolutions: that is to say, to separate you from the world, from your vices, from your passions, and from the infamy of your disorders, to make you lead a chaste, regular, and Christian life, which alone is worthy of reason; this is what the world calls violent and desperate resolutions. But moreover, under the pretence of avoiding undue excesses, you do not even take those resolutions which are the most necessary. Begin, however: the first transport soon abates; and it is much easier to moderate the excesses of piety, than to reanimate it when under the influence of sloth and languor. But besides, fear nothing from excessive fervour, and from the transports of your zeal: you will never go too far in that respect. An indolent, sensual heart like yours, nourished in pleasure and sloth, without relish for any thing that regards the service of God, does not promise us great indiscretion in the progress of a

Christian life; you do not know yourselves; you have not yet proved what obstacles all your inclinations are apt to oppose to the most common duties of piety. Only the precautions against lukewarmness and discouragement: this is the only snare which you have to fear. You recollect the history of Peter, who was ordered to put up his sword again, as though his zeal were likely to lead him too far, and who, on going thence, was overcome at the voice of a simple woman, and found, in his cowardice, the temptation which he seemed to fear only from his fervour and courage. What a delusion! through the fear of doing too much for God, we do nothing at all: the fear of paying too much attention to our salvation prevents our labouring for it, and we are lost through fear: too certainly saving ourselves: we dread the chimerical excesses of piety, and we do not fear a real distance from and a contempt of piety itself. Does the fear of doing too much to promote your fortune and elevation, and of pushing it too far, arrest you? Does it in the least cool the ardour of your steps and of your ambition? Is it not that very hope which supports and animates them? You consider nothing too much for the world; but every thing as excessive that is done for God: you fear and upbraid yourselves because you do not do enough for a worldly fortune; but you stop, through fear that you should do too much for your eternal welfare.

But I go still further, and I say that it is criminal ingratitude towards God to put off the thought of death, only because it disturbs and alarms you: for this impression of fear and terror is a singular grace with which God favours you. Alas! are there not many infidels who despise it, who make a dreadful merit of seeing it approach with firmness, and who regard it as the entire annihilation of their being? Are there not many sages and pretended Christian philosophers, who, without renouncing the faith, confine all their reflections, all their superior knowledge, to the seeing it arrive without emotion; and who reason

through life only to prepare themselves to meet their last moment with a firmness and serenity of mind which, as childish as the most vulgar fears, is the most foolish use that can be made of reason? Are there not many foolishly in love with valour and glory, who, in the midst of the battle rush into danger as to a spectacle, without remorse, without inquietude, and without reflections upon the consequence of their destiny? (This rashness, the valour of the nation renders still more familiar among us, than with many others; and I speak before a court in which those who compose it are capable of giving an example to others.) Are there not many sinners in the tranquillity of cities, and in the idleness of a private life, given up to an insensible and reprobate mind, that are no longer affected with this image? Finally, are there not many others, who, through the consequence of a lively, frivolous, and light character, and but ill suited to serious reflections, pass their whole lives without having for a single moment seriously thought of their latter end? God therefore confers a singular favour on you, in giving this thought so much strength and ascendancy in your mind: it is probably the way by which he wishes to bring you back to himself. If you ever leave your wanderings, you will leave them only in this way: your salvation appears to be attached to this remedy. What are you doing then when you dismiss this thought, because it throws you into salutary alarms? You deprive yourselves of the only succour which can facilitate your return to God: you render that peculiar grace abortive: you are, so to speak, discontented with his conduct in having favoured you; and you reproach yourselves with being too much affected. Tremble, my dear hearer, lest your heart should be fortified against these salutary fears—lest you should behold with a tranquil eye the most mournful spectacles—lest God should withdraw from you that means of salvation, and lest He should harden you against all the terrors of religion. A favour not only despised, but regarded even as a trouble, is soon followed

with the indignation, or at least with the indifference of the benefactor. Then the idea of death will leave you tranquil: you will run to a place of amusement as soon as you leave a mournful solemnity: you will see with equal indifference an hideous carcase, or the criminal object of your passions: you will then be pleased that you are raised above vulgar fears, and even applaud yourselves upon an alteration that has so terrible an aspect on your salvation. Turn that sensibility therefore to advantage for the regulation of your conduct, while God still grants it to you: bring near to you all the objects that are suited to revive that image in your mind, while it is yet able to disturb your false security: visit at times the tombs of your ancestors—in the presence of their ashes meditate upon the vanity of earthly things: go, at times, and interrogate them concerning what they retain in the dark abodes of death, of their pleasures, dignities, and glory. Go yourselves, and open these sad receptacles, and from what they formerly appeared in the eyes of men, behold what they are now—spectres, whose presence you cannot sustain—heaps of worms and corruption: this is what they are in the eyes of men; but what are they before God? Descend in imagination to those places of horror and corruption, and choose before hand your place: imagine yourselves in your last hour, stretched upon the bed of languishing, struggling with death, your limbs benumbed and already seized with a mortal chillness—your tongue already tied with the chains of death—your eyes fixed, covered with a confused mist, before which every thing begins to disappear—your neighbours and friends who are about you, offering useless prayers for your health, increasing your fear and regret, by the tenderness of their sighs, and the abundance of their tears; the minister of the Lord by their side, the sign* of salvation, then your only resource, in his hands—the words of faith, mercy, and hope in his mouth. Approach

* See Appendix, Note L.

this very instructive and interesting scene : imagine yourselves in the sad agitations of that last conflict, giving no evidence of life except in the convulsions which announce your death ; the whole world annihilated as to you, and yourselves about to appear before God, stripped for ever of your dignities and titles, and accompanied only by your works. This is not a prediction : it is the history of all who daily die before your eyes, and it is, by anticipation, your own. Think of that terrible moment : you will assuredly be brought to it, and the day is perhaps not very distant, perhaps it is just arrived. But, finally, however distant it may be, it will not be long, and you will come to it suddenly—in a moment ; and the only consolation which you can then have, will be that of having made your whole life the study, the resource, and the preparation for death.

Finally, and this is my last reason, let us go back to the source of these excessive fears which render the image and the thought of death so terrible—you will find it, no doubt, in the confusion of a guilty conscience : it is not death which you so much dread, it is the justice of God which awaits you beyond it, to punish the infidelities and disorders of your life : it is the consideration that you are not in a fit state to appear before him—that you are covered with the most odious wounds, which deface his image in you ; and that to die in the situation in which you are, would be to perish through eternal ages. Therefore purify your conscience, terminate and expiate your criminal passions, recal God to your mind, no more dare to do any thing in his sight deserving of his wrath and of his chastisements, put yourselves in a condition to hope for something from his infinite mercy after death, and you will then behold the approach of that last moment with less fear and oppression of mind, and the sacrifice which you had made to God, of the world and of your passions, will not only facilitate, but render the sacrifice pleasing

and consoling which you will then have to offer to him of your life.

For tell me, my brethren, what does death possess so terrific to a believer? From what will it separate him? From a perishing world, which is the country of repeals—from his riches, which were an incumbrance, the employment of which was attended with danger, and which he was forbidden to consecrate to the gratification of the senses—from his neighbours and friends, who will shortly follow him—from his body, which had been, till then, either the snare of his innocence or the perpetual obstacle to his holy desires—from his sovereigns, who frequently required from him criminal compliances,—or from his subjects, who made him responsible for their infidelities and crimes—from his posts, and dignities, which, by multiplying his duties, increased his danger—finally from life, which was to him only a scene of exile from which he desired to be delivered. What does death give to him for that which it takes away? It confers immutable blessings, of which no one can ever deprive him—eternal pleasures, which he will enjoy without fear—a deliverance from all his passions, which had been to him a continual source of inquietude and pain—a peace, incapable of interruption, which he could never have found in the world—the dissolution of all the bonds which attached him to the earth, and which retained him like a captive; and finally it confers on him the society of the righteous and blessed, instead of that of the sinful men from which he is separated. And what is there so agreeable in the present life, O my God, to a believer that should attach him so strongly to it? It is to him a vale of tears, in which the perils are infinite, and the conflicts are daily; in which victories are rare, falls are inevitable, and exertions must be unremitting; in which he must deny every gratification to his senses; in which every thing tempts, and almost every thing is prohibited; in which that which pleases him the most, is also

that which he must the most dread, and the most perseveringly avoid ; in a word, it is a state in which, if you do not suffer and weep, resist unto blood, and combat without ceasing, nay, and even hate your ownelves, you will be lost. What do you find therein so amiable, so attractive, and so capable of attaching a Christian ; and is not death to him a triumph and a gain ?

Besides, my brethren, death is the sole prospect and consolation which supports the fidelity of the just, groaning under affliction. They know that their end is near ; that the short and transient tribulations of this life, will be followed with an eternal weight of glory ; and, in this thought they find an inexhaustible source of patience, constancy, and joy. Do they feel the law in their members warring against the law in their mind, and exciting in them those dangerous emotions which bring innocence itself even to the brink of a precipice ? They are not ignorant that after the dissolution of their terrestrial body, it will be restored to them heavenly and spiritual ; and that then, delivered from all those miseries, they will resemble the angels of heaven ; and this thought supports and fortifies their minds. Are they weighed down under the pressure of the Redeemer's yoke ; and is their faith become feeble—on the point of relaxing, or of sinking under the weight of the austere duties of the Gospel ? Ah ! the day of the Lord is at hand : they approach the happy recompence ; and the end of their course, which they have already in view, animates and strengthens them. Listen to the manner in which the Apostle formerly comforted the primitive believers : " My brethren," saith he to them, " the time is short ; the day is at hand, the Lord is even at the door, and He will not tarry : rejoice therefore ; and again I say, Rejoice." This was all the consolation of those who were persecuted, insulted, proscribed, trodden under foot, and regarded as the offscouring of the world, who were the reproach of the Jews, and the derision of the Gentiles. They knew that

death was about to wipe away their tears—that then they should no longer be subject to mourning, grief, or suffering—that every thing would be new; and that thought alleviated all their pains. Ah! if any one had told these magnanimous confessors of the faith, that the Lord would not permit them to taste of death, but would leave them to abide for ever upon the earth, he would have shaken their faith, and have tempted them to inconstancy; and by depriving them of that hope, he would have deprived them of all their consolation.

And doubtless this does not, my brethren, surprise you, because to afflicted and miserable persons like them, death ought to appear a relief. You are mistaken. Ah! it was not their persecutions and sufferings which constituted their misery and sadness; these were their joy, their consolation and glory: we “glory in tribulation,” said they: it was the distance at which they still lived from Jesus Christ, that was the source of their tears, and the circumstance which rendered death so desirable. “While we are in the body,” said the Apostle, “we are absent from the Lord;” and that separation was a sad and painful condition to these believers. All piety consists in wishing for a reunion with Jesus Christ our Head, in sighing after the happy moment which shall incorporate us with all the elect in that mystical body, which has been forming since the creation, out of every nation, kindred, and tongue—which is the end of all the designs of God, and which is to glorify him with Jesus Christ throughout all ages. We are here as branches severed from the vine—like rivulets at a distance from their source—like strangers wandering far from their country—like captives chained in a prison, who are waiting for their deliverance—like children banished for a season from their paternal inheritance and mansion; in a word, like members separated from their body. Since Jesus Christ, our Head, has ascended to heaven, the earth is no longer the place of our abode: we expect the blessed hope and appearance of the

Lord, and this desire constitutes the whole of our piety and consolation: and for a Christian not to desire that happy moment, but to fear it, and to regard it as the greatest of evils, is to abjure Jesus Christ; it is to wish to have no part with him; it is to renounce the promises of revelation, and the glorious title of a citizen of heaven; it is to seek our happiness in the world, to doubt a hereafter, to regard religion only as a dream, and to believe that every thing will end with us.

No, my brethren, death possesses nothing but what is agreeable and desirable to a righteous man: arrived at that happy moment, he beholds without regret, that world on flames, which had never appeared to him but a heap of dung, and for which he had never felt any affection: he closes his eyes with pleasure upon all those vain spectacles which the world presents, which he had always regarded as momentary scenes, and whose dangerous illusions he had never ceased to fear: he feels without disquietude, nay, rather with pleasure, that this mortal body which had been the subject of all his temptations, and the fatal source of all his weaknesses is now about to be clothed with immortality: he regrets nothing upon the earth, where he leaves nothing, and from which his affections as well as his soul take their flight: he does not even complain that he is taken away in the midst of his course, and that he ends his days perhaps in the prime of life; on the contrary, he thanks his Deliverer for abridging his pains with his years, for exacting from him only the half of his debt, as the price of his eternal felicity, and for having speedily consummated his sacrifice, lest a longer abode in this corrupt world should have perverted his heart. His austerities, which were so difficult to the weakness of his flesh, then supply subjects of the sweetest reflection: he sees every thing vanish, except what he did for God—every thing abandons him—his property, his neighbours, his friends, and his dignities, all except his good work, and he is transported with joy at the thought that I

not his confidence in the favour of princes, in the children of men, in the vain hopes of fortune, in any thing that is about to perish, but in the Lord alone who abideth for ever, and in whose bosom he is about to find the peace and felicity which the creature cannot afford. Hence, easy respecting the past, despising the present, transported that he at length approaches this hereafter, the sole object of his desires, already beholding the bosom of Abraham open to receive him, and the Son of Man seated at the right hand of the Father, holding the immortal crown in his hand, he sleeps in Jesus, he is carried by happy spirits into the dwelling of the saints, and he returns to the place from whence he came forth. May you, my brethren, see your course terminate in this manner. This is my prayer for you. Amen.

SERMON XIII.

ON THE CERTAINTY OF A FUTURE STATE.

MATT. XXV. 46.

And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.

Thus, my brethren, will the desires, the hopes, the counsels, and the enterprizes of men finally terminate: thus will all the vain reflections of sages and libertines, the continual doubts and indecisions of unbelievers, the vast projects of conquerors, the monuments of human glory, the solitudes of ambition, the distinctions of talents, the inquietudes of fortune, the prosperity of empires, and all the trifling revolutions of the earth be brought to a close. Such will be the terrible solution, that will at length unfold to us the mysteries of Providence, and the diverse destinies of the children of Adam, and which will justify the conduct of God in the government of the universe. The present life is only a fleeting moment, and the beginning of an eternal futurity. Endless torments, or the pleasures of an immortal felicity, will finally divide the condition of the whole human race; and one of these conditions must be ours.

Yet the representation of this awful scene, which was formerly sufficient to daunt the ferocity of tyrants, to shake the firmness of philosophers, to trouble the effeminacy and voluptuousness of the Cæsars, to civilize the most barbarous nations, to create so many martyrs, to people deserts, and to subjugate the whole world to the cross of Christ; this terrifying representation, I say, is

now scarcely ever employed except to alarm the timidity of the simple: these grand objects are become vulgar paintings, which we hardly dare expose to the false delicacy of the rulers and the wise men of the world; and the only effect which is commonly derived from discourses of this nature, is to excite an inquiry, on leaving them, whether all will come to pass as we have declared.

For, my brethren, we live at a time when many have made shipwreck of faith; when a horrible philosophy, like a mortal poison, is secretly diffused, and undertakes to justify the vilest crimes and abominations, in opposition to the belief of future rewards and punishments. This plague has passed from the palaces of the great, to the cottages of the poor; and every where is the piety of the just wounded by the language of impiety and the maxims of licentiousness.

And verily, my brethren, I am not surprised that dissolute men should doubt a future state, and endeavour to combat or to weaken a truth so capable of disturbing them in their criminal pursuits. It is terrible to expect eternal misery. The world has no pleasure that is proof against a thought so appalling: and therefore the world has at all times striven to erase it from the human mind: it is fully aware that the belief of a hereafter is an inconvenient restraint upon human passions; and that it can never succeed in forming tranquil and determined voluptuaries, till it hath first made them unbelievers.

Let us therefore, my brethren, deprive the corruption of the human heart of so monstrous and so frail a support: let us prove to these dissolute spirits that they will outlive their disorders—that every thing dies not with the body—that this life will terminate their crimes, but not their misery; and the more effectually to confound infidelity, let us attack it in the vain pretences by which it is supported.

In the first place, Who knows, says the Infidel, but every thing dies together with us? Is that other life concerning

which we are addressed quite certain? Who has returned thence to inform us of what passes there?

Secondly, Is it, they say, worthy of the greatness of God to humble himself to regard what passes among men? What does it concern him that worms of the earth like us, murder, deceive, and rend each other, live in pleasure or in temperance? Does it not argue presumptuous pride in man, to suppose that a God so great will concern himself about him?

Finally, What probability is there, they add, that God, who has caused man to be born such as he is, should punish as crimes, the inclinations to pleasure which we find within, and which nature has implanted in us?—These constitute the whole philosophy of voluptuaries—uncertainty respecting a hereafter—the majesty of God which so mean a creature as man is incapable of offending—the weakness which is born with him, and which it would be unjust to impute to him as a crime.

Let us prove therefore first, in opposition to the uncertainty of infidels, that the certainty of a future state is justified by the clearest light of reason. Secondly, in opposition to the unworthy idea which they entertain of the greatness of God, that this truth is justified by his wisdom and glory. Finally, in opposition to the pretence drawn from the weakness of men, that it is justified even by the judgment of his own conscience. The certainty of a future state; its necessity; and the secret consciousness which we have of it, will form the whole of my discourse.

Regard not, O God! the insult which the blasphemies of Infidelity offer to thy glory: but look down and behold of what that reason is capable which is unenlightened by thee. Discern in the monstrous errors of the human mind, all the severity of thy justice in abandoning it to itself; to the end that the more we expose the insensate blasphemies of the infidel, the more he may become an object worthy of thy pity, and of the riches of thy mercy.

condemnation, and the sad whisper of chance; and Almighty Workman presided at our form birth; that the breath of immortality animates that a part of ourselves will survive us; and leaving this terrestrial house, our souls will return to the bosom of God from which they proceeded, and inhabit the eternal regions of the living, where we will receive according to his works.

It is with this truth that Paul began to declare before the Areopagus. (Acts xvii. 31.) We are mortal offspring of God, said he to that assembly and He has appointed a day in which He will judge the world. It is in that manner that the Apostles laid the first foundation of the doctrine of salvation among the idolatrous and corrupt nations. But to us, my brethren, arrived at these last times, after the fulness of time has been brought into the church—after the work has been believed, and all the mysteries of religion have been elucidated, all the prophecies fulfilled, Jesus Christ has died, and the road to heaven opened and cleared for all who appear in these last times, when the day of judgment is much nearer than it was when our fathers began the world. ah! what should be the object of our ministers but to prepare the faithful for this great hope, and to teach them to hold themselves in readiness to appear before Christ at his second coming, instead of having

have returned thence to inform us. Perhaps there is nothing after death: let us therefore enjoy the present, and leave to chance a futurity which either does not exist, or with which at least it is not intended we should become acquainted.

Now, I say, this uncertainty is suspicious in the principle which produced it, foolish in the arguments by which it is supported, and terrible in its consequences. Do not refuse me your attention.

Suspicious in the principle by which it was produced. For how, my brethren, did this uncertainty respecting a hereafter arise in the mind of the Infidel? It is only necessary to trace an opinion to its source, to discover whether it was the influence of the truth, or of the passions, which established it in the world.

The Infidel bore within himself, at his birth, the principles of natural religion, in common with all men: he found written in his heart a law which forbade violence, injustice, perfidy, and, in short, all that we ourselves should be unwilling to endure: education strengthened these natural sentiments; he was taught to know, to love, and to fear God. He was instructed in the principles of virtue: it was rendered amiable to him by examples: and although he found propensities within himself that were opposed to duty, yet when he suffered himself to be carried away with them his heart secretly espoused the cause of virtue in opposition to his weakness.

Thus the Infidel formerly lived upon the earth: he, with the rest of mankind, adored a Supreme Being: he respected his laws, dreaded his chastisements, and expected the fulfilment of his promises. Whence is it that he no longer knows God—that crimes have appeared to him to be so denominated only through human policy—hell an illusion; the future a chimera, and the soul a fleeting breath which expires with the body? By what steps has he arrived at this new and surprising knowledge? By what means has he succeeded in freeing himself from

reflection? Has he purified his heart lest his should lead him astray? How difficult is it to abandon the first sentiments with which the mind is imbued!

Hearken to him, my brethren, and adore the judgment of God towards those depraved persons whom He deluged to the vanity of their own imaginations. By degrees he became irregular in his conduct, the rule appeared doubtful: by degrees as he became brutal, he endeavored to persuade himself that man naturally resembles a brute. He became wicked only through stopping the avenue that might conduct him to the truth; he no longer considering religion as a serious affair, and examining it only to dishonour it by his blasphemous sacrilegious pleasantries: he became wicked only by endeavoring to fortify himself against the voice of conscience, giving up himself to the most unhallowed enjoyments. It is by these means that he arrived at the sublime knowledge of Infidelity: it is to these efforts, that he owes the discovery of a truth which had either been unknown to or abhorred by all predecessors.

This then is the source of all unbelief—the depravity of the heart. Yes, my brethren, find me, if you can, who are wise, sincere, chaste, regular, and temperate.

credit to their impiety, or because the satiety of pleasures led them to this false temperance. Debauchery was the source of their irreligion: their hearts were corrupted, before they made shipwreck of faith: they had an end to answer by believing that every thing would die with the body, before they arrived at the persuasion that it would do so: the long enjoyment of pleasures might indeed have produced a dislike to crimes, but it did not render virtue the more amiable to them.

What a consolation for us, my brethren, who believe that it is necessary to renounce all morality, integrity, modesty, and every sentiment of humanity, before we can renounce the faith; and that we must cease to be men before we can cease to be Christians.

See then the doubts of the Infidel already proved suspicious in their origin; and in the second place, they are absurd in the arguments upon which they are founded.

For, my brethren, to induce the astonishing resolution of universal scepticism and total recklessness of all that is declared to us concerning an eternal hereafter there must have been doubtless very decisive and convincing reasons. It is unnatural for man to hazard so serious a concern as his eternal state, upon light and frivolous evidence; still more so for him to abandon thereupon the common sentiments of mankind, the faith of his fathers, the religion of all ages, the consent of all nations, and the prejudices of his education, unless he is compelled so to do by the overpowering evidence of truth. Except the Infidel is very certain that every thing dies with the body, nothing can equal his madness and extravagance. Now, is he thoroughly assured of it? What are the strong reasons which have determined him to take this dreadful step? It is not known, he saith, what passes in that other world of which we speak. The righteous die like the wicked, man like the brute; and no one returns to inform us which of the two was mistaken. Press him more closely, and you will be astonished to see the weakness of Infidelity;

being deceived in ascribing honour to itself, to the declaring itself of a party so disgraceful to its nature. What a mind must the infidel have, therefore, received from an unfavourable nature, to prefer believing, that he is formed only for the earth when there is so great an inequality of arguments to support such views; and to regard himself with complacency as a mere assemblage of dust—a companion of the grazing herd? What do I say, my brethren? what a monster must the Infidel be in the world, to reject the universal opinion, only because it reflects too great honour on his nature; and to believe that it was the vanity of men alone that introduced it into the world, and persuaded them that they were immortal?

But no, my brethren; these carnal men are in the right to refuse the honour which religion ascribes to their nature; and to persuade themselves that their souls are wholly composed of earth, and that every thing dies with the body. Sensual, profligate, and effeminate men, who have no other restraint than a brutal instinct, no other rule than the impulse of their raging passions; no other occupation than to awaken, by new arts, the cupidity already satiated; men of this character ought not to find it difficult to believe, that they have in themselves no other principle of spiritual life, and that the body constitutes the whole of their being: and as they imitate the manners of the beasts, they may be excused in attributing no other nature to themselves. But let them not judge all men by themselves; there still exist chaste, modest, and temperate persons in the world: let them not attribute to nature in general the shameful propensities of their own wills; let them not degrade the whole human race because they have already degraded themselves to the deepest ignominy: let them seek their fellows among men: then will they, finding themselves almost alone in the world, perceive that they are rather the monstrous anomalies, than the ordinary offspring of nature.

Moreover the Infidel is foolish, because, even if the arguments were equally strong on both sides, his mind, his reputation, and his interest, should determine him in favour of the faith. For, my brethren, we have already inquired, what does the Infidel risk by believing? What mournful consequences are likely to result from his credulity if he be mistaken? He will live honourably, honestly, and innocently: he will be mild, affable, just, sincere, and religious; a generous friend, a faithful husband, and an equitable master; he would moderate those passions which would otherwise have rendered his life miserable; he will abstain from those pleasures and excesses which would have prepared for him a sorrowful old age, or a broken fortune: he will enjoy the reputation of virtue, and the esteem of men. This is what he risks. Even if every thing terminated with the present life, this would be the only secret to pass it tranquilly and happily; this is the only inconvenience that I perceive would result from such a step. If there be no eternal reward, what will he lose by expecting it? Only certain sensual and fleeting pleasures, which would soon either weary him by the disgusts which succeed them, or tyrannise over him by the new desires which they enkindle: he will lose the fearful satisfaction of having been during the moments which he appeared upon the earth, cruel, unnatural, and voluptuous; destitute of faith, morals, and conscience; of having been perhaps despised and dishonoured in the midst of his people. I perceive no greater misfortune: he returns to non-existence, and his error is accompanied with no other consequence.

But if there be a future state—if he mistakes in refusing to believe, what does he not hazard? the loss of eternal blessings, and the possession of thy glory, O my God! which would have rendered him for ever happy. But these are only the beginning of his misery: he departs to find devouring flames, a punishment without end and without degree, an eternity of wrath or horror. Now,

compare these two destinies; which alternative will the infidel take? Will he hazard the short duration of a few days, or will he hazard a boundless eternity? Will he adhere to the present time, which is about to terminate, and in which he cannot be happy? or will he fear a futurity which has no limits but eternity, and which will end only with God himself? What wise man, even in case there were an equal uncertainty respecting both, would dare to hesitate here? And what appellation must we give to the infidel, who, having only frivolous doubts in his favour, and seeing authority, precedent, custom, reason, the unanimous voice of all ages, the whole world on the side of Revelation, alone chooses the fearful alternative of unbelief—dies tranquilly, as if he were to cease to exist—leaves his eternal destiny to chance, and proceeds with total indifference to hazard an event so momentous? Is this the character of one who is governed by the calmness of reason, or that of a madman who expects no other resource than his despair? The uncertainty of the infidel is therefore absurd, with reference to the reasons by which it is supported.

But, in the last place, it is also terrible in its consequences. And here permit me to pass by for the present great doctrinal arguments: I wish only to address myself to the conscience of the unbeliever, and to confine myself to sensible proofs.

Now, if every thing is to terminate with our mortal career—if man has nothing to expect after the present life—if this is our country, our origin, and the sole felicity which we can promise ourselves, why are we not happy? If we are formed only for the pleasures of sense, why are they incapable of satisfying us—why do they always leave a weariness and an aching void in our hearts? If man possesses nothing which raises him above the brute, why do not his days flow tranquilly on in the same manner in mere sensual enjoyments, undisturbed by cares, inquietudes, dissatisfaction, or melancholy? If man has no

other happiness to hope for than a temporal one, why is it that he no where meets with it in the world? Whence is it that riches disquiet, honours weary, and pleasures fatigue him? whence is it that the sciences confound, and rather stimulate than satisfy, his curiosity? why does reputation incommode and embarrass him? why is it that all these together cannot satisfy the vast desires of his soul, and that they still leave him something to desire? Every other creature, content with its destiny, appears happy, after its way, in the state in which the Author of nature has placed it: the stars, at rest in the firmament, do not quit their abode to go and enlighten other worlds: the earth, regular in its revolutions, does not leap on high to occupy their place; the animals feed in the fields without envying men who dwell in cities and sumptuous palaces; the birds warble in the air, without thinking whether there are creatures upon the earth happier than themselves. In nature every thing is happy, every thing is in its place: man alone is inquiet and discontented; he alone is a prey to his passions, is distracted by continual fears, finds his punishment in his hopes, and becomes melancholy and unhappy in the midst of his pleasures: man is the only being who meets with nothing on the earth upon which he can fix his affections.

Whence is this, O man? Is it not because, while here below, thou art not in thy proper element; that thou art made for heaven; that thy desires are more capacious than the whole world; that the earth is not thy country, and that all which is not God is no way suited to thee? Answer if thou canst, or rather question thine own heart, and thou wilt be faithful.

In the second place, if every thing dies with the body, who could have persuaded all men of every age and country that their souls were immortal? Whence could this strange idea of immortality have entered the human mind? If man were formed only for the functions of sense, how could a sentiment so foreign to his nature have prevailed

in the world? For if man, like the brute, be made only for time, nothing could be more incomprehensible to him than this very idea of immortality. Could machines formed only from the dust, which are destined to live and die only a sensual felicity, have either conceived, or have found within themselves, such noble sentiments, and sublime ideas? Yet this extraordinary opinion is become common to all men; and, though so contrary even to sense, if the whole of man, like the brute, dies before our eyes, has established itself all over the world: this sentiment, which could never have found an inventor in the world, has obtained a universal reception among all nations—among the most savage, as well as the most cultivated—the most polished as well as the most rude, and among the most unbelieving, as well as the most obedient to the faith.

Go back to the first ages: take a survey of all nations, read the history of kingdoms and empires, hearken to those who return from the most distant sales; the immortality of the soul always has been, and still is, the belief of all the nations of the universe. The knowledge of one only God may have been lost in the world; his glory, power, and immensity may have been annihilated in the hearts and minds of men; even whole nations of savages may continue to live without any kind of worship, religion, or God in the world: yet they all expect a future state; the belief of the soul's immortality could never be effaced from their minds, but they have all pictured to themselves a region which their souls will inhabit after death; and, in the forgetfulness of God, they have still retained a consciousness of their own nature.

Now, whence does it come to pass, that men of such different humours, worship, countries, sentiments, and interests; who are unlike even in figure, and who scarcely appear to be of the same species, should nevertheless all agree in this particular, and should all desire to be immortal? Here is no collusion; for how could you bring

men of every country and of every age, to agree in opinion? This is not a mere prejudice of education; because the manners, customs, and worship, which are generally the consequence of prejudice, are not the same among all nations; yet this idea of the soul's immortality is common to them all. This is not a sect; because, besides its being the universal religion of the world, this doctrine has had no chief or protector: men have adopted this opinion themselves, or rather nature has taught it them without the help of a master; and it has, of itself, since the beginning of things, passed from the fathers to the children, and always maintained itself in the world.

Oh! thou who believest thyself only a lump of clay, depart out of the world, in which thou findest none of thine own opinion: go therefore to another earth in search of men of a different species, resembling the brute. Or rather shudder with horror at thyself on finding that thou art, as it were, alone in the universe—a rebel against all nature, disavowing the convictions of thine own heart; and recognise, in the sentiment common to all men, the universal impress stamp'd by the Author of their being!

Finally, I conclude with this last argument: All societies of men—the laws which unite us to each other—the most sacred and inviolable duties of civil life,—all derive their foundation only from the certainty of a future state. Therefore, if every thing dies with the body, the world must adopt different laws, manners, and customs; and every thing must change its appearance upon the face of the earth. If every thing dies with the body, then the maxims of equity, friendship, honour, honesty, and gratitude, are no longer any other than popular errors; since we owe nothing to men who are no way related to us, and to whom no common tie of worship or of hope unite us;—to men who will soon return to non-existence, and who are already no more. If every thing dies with us, the ing names of child, father, friend, and husband theatrical appellations, or vain titles which de

since friendship, even that which arises from virtue, is no longer a lasting bond ; since our fathers who preceded us, no longer exist, and our children will not be our successors, — for that non-existence, to which we shall one day return, has nothing to succeed it ; and since the sacred bond of marriage is only a brutal union, from which, through a whimsical and fortuitous connexion, beings are brought forth who resemble us, but that possess no quality in common with ourselves but nothingness.

What shall I say more ? If every thing dies together with us, domestic annals, and the genealogy of our ancestors are no more than a line of chimeras, since we have no forefathers, and we shall have no posterity, and it is foolish to be solicitous about a name and a posterity : the honour which is ascribed to the memory of illustrious men, a childish error, since it is ridiculous to honour that which no longer exists ; funeral ceremonies, a vulgar illusion ; the ashes of our fathers and friends, a worthless dust which we may cast to the wind, and which belongs to no one ; the last requests of the dying, held so sacred among the most barbarous nations, only the last sound of a machine which is being broken up. And, to say all in a word, if every thing dies with us, the laws enjoin only a foolish subjection ; kings and sovereigns are phantoms which the weakness of the people has created ; justice a usurpation on the liberty of men ; the law of marriage, a foolish scruple ; modesty, a prejudice ; honour and honesty, mere chimeras ; incests, parricides, and atrocious perfidies, the mere amusements of nature, and names which the policy of legislators has invented.

Such is the state to which the sublime philosophy of infidels is reduced ; such is the strength, reason, and wisdom of which they perpetually boast. Consent to their maxims, and the whole world immediately returns to a dreadful chaos ; every thing becomes confounded upon the earth ; all the distinctions of vice and of virtue are set aside ; the most inviolable laws of society vanish ; the re-

gulation of manners ceases, and the government of states and empires no longer possess any rule ; all the harmony of the political body falls into disorder, and the human race becomes only a collection of fools and barbarians, of profligates and madmen, of liars and monsters, who possess no law but strength, and no restraint but their passions or the fear of authority—no bond but irreligion and independence—no God but themselves. Such is the world of infidels ; and if this frightful model of a republic pleases you, form, if you can, a society of these monsters. All that remains for us to say is this, that you are worthy to occupy a place therein.

How worthy is it of man, therefore, my brethren, to expect an eternal destiny—to regulate his conduct by the law of God, and to live, as bound, at a future day, to give an account of his actions before Him who weigheth the spirits, and who taketh the wise in their own craftiness !

The professed uncertainty of the infidel is therefore suspicious in its principle, absurd in its reasons, terrible in its consequences. But after having shewn to you, that nothing is more contrary to right reason than the doubt which he forms respecting a hereafter, let us complete his confusion by exposing his pretences ; and let us shew that nothing is more opposed to the idea of a God of wisdom, and to the sentiments of conscience.

Part II.—It is no doubt astonishing, my brethren, that the infidel should seek, even in the greatness of God, a protection from his crimes ; and, finding nothing within himself that can justify the horrors of his mind, he should pretend to find in the awful majesty of the Supreme Being, an indulgence which he cannot find even in the corruption of his own heart.

Is it indeed becoming the greatness of God, saith the infidel, to be amused with what passes among men—to number their vices or virtues—to study even their thoughts, and their infinite and frivolous desires ? Do men, worms

of the earth, which vanish beneath the majesty of His looks, deserve the trouble of such a close inspection? And do we not think too much after the manner of men when we ascribe an employment to God, who is represented to us as so great, which would be unworthy even of man?

But before I develop all the extravagance of this blasphemy, remark, I entreat you, my brethren, that it is the infidel himself who here degrades the grandeur of God by making him like unto man. Has God occasion narrowly to inspect the conduct of men, in order to become acquainted with their actions and thoughts? Must he employ care and attention to perceive what passes upon the earth? Is it not in him that we live, and move, and have our being? Can we escape his observation, or can he close his eyes against our crimes? What madness, therefore, in the infidel to suppose that it would become a painful employment to the Divinity, to pay attention to what passes in the world! His sole occupation is to know and enjoy himself.

This reflection being supposed, I reply in the first place: If it consists with the greatness of God to leave virtue and vice without chastisement or recompence, then it is indifferent whether we be just, sincere, kind, and charitable; or cruel, false, perfidious, and unnatural: for in that case, God has no greater love to virtue, modesty, uprightness, and religion, than to immodesty, faithlessness, impiety, and perjury; since the just and the wicked, the pure and the impure, will have the same end, and an eternal annihilation will speedily equalize and confound them for ever in the horrors of the tomb.

What do I say, my brethren? God, here below, even seems to declare himself in favour of the infidel, and in opposition to the good man. He exalts the infidel as the cedar of Lebanon: He loads him with honours and riches: He favours his desires: He gives success to his projects; for infidels are, almost always, the prosperous of the world. While, on the contrary, God seems to forget the just: He

humbles—He afflicts—He gives him up to reproach and to the power of his enemies : for affliction and opprobrium are commonly the portion of good men in this world. What a monster is the Divine Being, if every thing terminates with man at his death, and if there be no other calamities or blessings to be expected beside those of the present life ! Is He therefore the protector of adulteries, of sacrilege, and of the most dreadful crimes ; the persecutor of innocence, of modesty, of piety, and of the purest virtues ? Are His favours then the reward of crimes, and His chastisements the sole recompence of virtue ? What darkness, weakness, confusion, and iniquity, does the infidel ascribe to the Deity ?

What ! would it, my brethren, consist with His greatness to leave the world, which He has created, in such universal disorder ? to behold the wicked, almost at all times, prevail over the just—the innocent dethroned by the usurper—the father become the victim of the ambition of an unnatural son—the husband expiring by the hands of a barbarous and faithless spouse ? Can we suppose, that, from the exalted throne of his majesty, God would look down upon these mournful events as a species of entertainment, but refrain from taking any cognisance of them ? Because He is great, must He be weak, unjust, or unfeeling ? Because men are little, must they be allowed to be either dissolute without guilt, or virtuous without merit ?

If such were thy character, O thou Supreme Being ! if it were Thou whom we adore under such terrific ideas, could I any longer acknowledge Thee as my father and protector ; as my comforter in trouble, my support in weakness, or as the rewarder of my fidelity ? Thou wouldest then resemble an indolent and a capricious tyrant, who should immolate men upon the altar of his vainglory, and should bring them out of nothing only to make them subservient to his amusement or caprice.

For finally, my brethren, if there be no future state, what design worthy of his wisdom could God have pro-

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instinct, therefore, must either not be derived from the first institution of nature, or it must be a departure from it; since all the laws which have been enacted in the world, were enacted only to restrain it; since all those, who, in every age, have had the reputation of being wise and virtuous, have resisted its dictates; since all nations have ever regarded those infamous wretches as monsters, and as the reproach of humanity, who gave up themselves, without reserve and without shame, to brutal sensualities; and since, if this maxim were once established, that our propensities and our desires cannot be criminal, society could no longer subsist—men would be obliged to separate from each other, to go and inhabit the forest, and to live apart, like the beasts of the field, in order to be in security.

Besides, let us render justice to man, or rather let us ascribe it to his Creator. If we find within ourselves propensities to vice and voluptuousness, do we not also find the sentiments of virtue, modesty, and innocence? If the law in our members draws us towards the pleasures of sense, do we not also bear another law written in our hearts which recalls us to chastity and temperance? Now, between these contrary inclinations, why does the infidel decide that what inclines us to the senses is the most conformable to the nature of man? Is it because it is the most violent? Its very violence proves its disorder: that which proceeds from nature ought to be more moderate. Is it because it is always the strongest? There are just and faithful persons in whom it is always subject to reason. Is it because it is always the most agreeable? A proof that the pleasure of sense is not designed to render man happy, is this, disgust soon succeeds its indulgence; and, moreover, to the good man, virtue has a thousand times more charms than vice. Finally, is it because it is the most worthy of man? You will not dare to assert it, because it is thereby that he confounds himself with the brute. Why therefore do you decide in favour of the senses,

in opposition to reason; and why do you maintain that it is more conformable to the nature of man to live like the brute, than like a reasonable being?

Finally, if all men were so depraved and blindly given up, like animals destitute of reason, to their brutal instinct, and to the dominion of the senses, and of the passions, you would, perhaps, be in the right in saying to us, that these are propensities inseparable from our nature, and in finding in the common example an excuse for your irregularities. But look around you: are righteous persons no longer to be found upon the earth? The question here does not respect those vain discourses with which you so often assail piety, and of whose injustice you yourselves are so sensible; speak honestly, and give glory to the truth.

Are there no longer any chaste, faithful, timorous souls, who live in the fear of the Lord, and in the observance of his holy law? Whence is it, therefore, that you do not possess the same dominion over your passions as the righteous? Did they not inherit from nature the same propensities as yourselves? Do not various objects awaken in their hearts the same feelings as in yours? Do they not bear in themselves the sources of the same misery? What do the righteous possess above you, except the strength and fidelity of which you are destitute?

O man! thou imputest to God a weakness which is the effect of thine own disorders! Thou ascribest to the Author of nature the aberrations of thine own will! Not satisfied with insulting him, thou wouldest make Him responsible for thy outrages; and thou pretendest that the fruit of thy crimes becomes the title to thine innocence! Upon what wild chimeras is a depraved heart capable of feeding, in order to justify to itself its shameful and infamous vices!

God is therefore just, my brethren, when He punishes the transgressors of his law; and let not the infidel here say to himself, The reward of the righteous then will be a resurrection to immortal life; and the punishment of the

sinner, the eternal annihilation of his soul: for this is the last resource of impiety.

For what punishment would it be to the infidel to cease to exist? He desires this annihilation; he proposes it to himself as his sweetest hope; he lives tranquilly in the midst of his pleasures through this pleasing expectation. What! will the righteous God punish the sinner by giving him a destiny agreeably to his wish? Ah! God does not, in this manner, punish the guilty. For what can the infidel find so grievous in returning to non-existence? Not to be deprived of his God; for he neither knows, loves, nor wishes for Him, and his only god is himself: not to cease to exist; for what can be more agreeable to a monster who knows that he cannot exist after death, except to suffer and to expiate the horrors of an abominable life: not to lose the pleasures of the world and all the objects of his passions; for when we no longer exist we no longer love. Conceive if you can a more favourable lot for the infidel: and shall this be at length the agreeable termination of his debaucheries, his abominations, and his blasphemies!

No, my brethren, the hope of the infidel will perish, but his crimes will not perish with him; his torments will be eternal, as his pleasures would have been, if he had had the appointment of his own destiny. He would have wished to have immortalized himself upon the earth in the enjoyment of sensual pleasures: death has limited his crimes, but not his desires. The righteous Judge, who searches the heart, will therefore proportion the punishment to the offence; eternal flames to those criminal desires which he wished to be eternal; and eternity itself will only be a just compensation: "These shall go away into everlasting punishment, and the righteous into life eternal."

What shall we conclude from this discourse?—That the infidel is to be pitied who seeks, in a terrible uncertainty respecting the truths of religion, the sweetest ~~hope~~ ~~faith~~

destiny—that he is to be pitied in not being able to live tranquilly excepting as he lives without faith, without worship, without God, and without conscience—that he is to be pitied, if the Gospel must be a fable; the faith of all ages, mere credulity; the opinion of all men, a popular error; the first principles of nature and of reason, the prejudices of infancy; the blood of numerous martyrs, whom the hope of a future state supported amid the severest torments, a scheme concerted to deceive men; the conversion of the universe, an human enterprise; the fulfilment of prophecy mere chance; in a word, if it is necessary that all which is the best confirmed in the world, must be found false, that he may be preserved from eternal misery. What madness to be able to cherish a sort of tranquillity in the midst of so many foolish suppositions!

O man! I will shew thee a more certain way to be easy and happy. Fear that future state which thou forcest thyself to disbelieve: ask us no more what passes in that other life concerning which we speak to thee, but incessantly ask thyself what thou art doing in this: quiet thy conscience by the innocence of thy conduct, and not by the impiety of thy sentiments: set thine heart at rest by calling God to thy succour, and not by doubting whether He regards thee. The peace of the infidel is only a dreadful despair: seek thy happiness, not by shaking off the yoke of faith, but by tasting its sweetness: practise the maxims which it prescribes to thee, and thy reason will no longer refuse submission to the mysteries which it commands thee to believe: a hereafter will no longer appear to thee incredible, when thou ceasest to live like those who confine all their felicity to the short duration of the present life. Then, instead of fearing this futurity, thou wilt hasten it by thy desires; thou wilt sigh after that happy day in which the Son of Man, the Father of the everlasting age, will come to punish unbelievers, and to conduct all those into his kingdom who have lived in the expectation of a blessed immortality. Amen.

SERMON XIV.

ON THE GENERAL JUDGMENT.

LUKE XXI. 27.

Then shall they see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven, with great power and majesty.

SIR,—Such will be the last spectacle which will terminate the perpetual revolutions that the world daily offers to our view, and which either amuse us by their novelty or seduce us by their charms. Such will be the coming of the Son of Man, the day of his revelation, the completion of his reign, the full redemption of his mystical body. Such the day which will lay open the minds of men: that day of calamity and despair to some; of peace, consolation, and joy to others; the hope of the righteous, the terror of the wicked; that day which will decide the destiny of all men.

Such is the representation of that awful day, which the predictions of the Saviour had left continually present to the minds of the primitive believers; which rendered them patient in persecution, joyful in affliction, and glorious even under reproaches. It is this which has since sustained the faith of martyrs, animated the constancy of virgins, and softened to the hermit the horrors of the wilderness; it is this which continues to the present day to people those religious solitudes, which the piety of our fathers erected to oppose the evil contagion of the world.

You yourselves, my brethren, when at times you have reflected upon the awful pomp of that great event, have been unable to suppress the feelings of contrition and dis-

may. But they have only been transient alarms; more pleasing and agreeable images have, in a moment, effaced them from your minds, and restored to you your former tranquillity. In that happy period of the church not to have desired the day of the Lord would have been considered a renouncing of the faith. The whole consolation of those primitive believers arose from the expectation of it, and the Apostles were even obliged to moderate that sacred ardour of the faithful; but now, alas! the church is compelled to employ all the terrors of the sacred ministry to bring it to the remembrance of Christians, and the whole effect of our discourse consists in leading them to fear the day of the Lord.

I do not propose, however, on this occasion to unfold all the particulars of that terrible event. I wish to confine myself to one circumstance, which has always appeared to me the most suited to make a deep impression upon the mind: it is the full exposure of the minds of men which will then be made.

Now this is the whole of my design. In the present life the sinner is never thoroughly acquainted with himself; nor more than half known to others: he commonly lives ignorant of himself through his blindness, and unknown to others through his dissimulation and artifice. In that great day he will know himself, and he will be known by others. The sinner discovered to himself, the sinner fully revealed to every creature, are the subjects upon which I have resolved to make a few simple and edifying reflections. Let us pray, &c.

Part I.—Every thing, saith the Wise Man, is reserved for the future, and remains uncertain in the present state, because here one thing happens alike to the just and to the unjust, to the good and to the wicked, to the clean and to the unclean, to him who sacrifices and to him who despises sacrifices. (Eccles. ix. 2.) What idea, my brethren, should we form of Providence in the government of the

world, if we were to judge of His wisdom and justice only by the various destinies which He appoints unto men in the present life? What! shall blessings and calamities be here dispensed without choice, care, or distinction? Shall the just usually groan under affliction and misery, while the wicked live surrounded with honour, pleasure, and abundance? And, after fortunes so different, and practices so dissimilar, shall both sink alike into eternal oblivion? or shall the God of justice and vengeance, before whom they shall appear, neither deign to weigh their works, nor to discern their merit? Thou art righteous, O Lord, and Thou wilt render to every one according to his works.

This great article then of the Christian faith, so agreeable even to natural equity, being assumed, I say, that in that terrible day, in which the sinner will appear in the face of the universe, before the awful tribunal, accompanied only with his works, the laying open of the minds of men will be the most dreadful punishment to the faithless soul. The strict examination of that day will unveil him to himself: These are all the particulars of this formidable inquiry.

I do not stop, on the present occasion, to lead you to consider all the titles with which He, who will then examine you, will be invested—those titles that announce the severity with which he will weigh your works and thoughts in his balance. He will appear as a severe legislator, jealous of the holiness of his law—of that law by which alone He will judge you. All the mitigations, all the vain interpretations, which custom or a false science have invented, will vanish away; they will be dissipated before the light of the Divine law; the resources with which they flattered the sinner will fail; and the offended Legislator will examine the false interpretations which have corrupted its purity, with greater severity, if possible, than the open transgressions by which it has been violated. He will appear as a Judge, charged with the interests of his Father's glory in opposition to the sinner, and established to judge between God and man; and that will be the day

in which He will display his zeal for the honour of the Divine Being, in opposition to those who have denied him the glory due unto his name. As a Saviour, who will shew you his wounds to reproach you with your ingratitude : all that He has done for you will be turned against you ; his blood, the price of your salvation, will raise its voice, and demand your ruin ; and his despised favours will be reckoned amongst your greatest crimes. He will appear as the Searcher of hearts, to whose eyes the most hidden counsels and the most secret thoughts are open and manifest. Finally, He will appear as a God of terrible majesty, before whom the heavens will be rolled away, the elements will be dissolved, all nature will be confounded ; and the sinner will be obliged to endure the examination and terror of His Presence.

Now, these are the circumstances of this terrible examination. First, it will be the same towards all men : " Before him shall be gathered all nations," saith another Evangelist (Matt. xxv. 32). Difference of centuries, of countries, of age, of conditions, of birth and constitution, will be no longer reckoned for any thing : and as the Gospel by which you will be judged is the law of every time and of every condition ; and has only the same rules to propose to the noble and to the mean ; to the prince and to the subject ; to the great and to the people ; to the recluse and to the man who lives in the turmoil of the world ; to the believer who lives in the fervour of the primitive times, and to him who lives after the relaxed manners of the present age ; the examination of the criminals will proceed without any difference of process. Vain excuses, resulting from rank, birth, the perils of our situation, the manners of our age, the weakness of our constitution, will be no longer listened to. And as to chastity, modesty, ambition, the forgiveness of offences, self-denial, the mortification of our sinful propensities, the righteous Judge will demand as exact an account from the Greek as the Barbarian ; from the poor, as the powerful ; from the man of the world, as from him who

lives in retirement; from the prince, as from the man; citizen; finally, from the Christians of these latter times, as from the first disciples of the Gospel: "And all nations shall be gathered before him."

Vain judgment of the world, how strangely wilt thou then be confounded! And how little shall we think of noble blood, of the glory of ancestry, of the honour of reputation, of the distinction of talents, and of all those pompous titles by which men endeavour to ennoble their meanness, and upon which they build so many distinctions and privileges; when we shall see, in that crowd of criminals, the sovereign confounded with the slave—the great with the people—the learned indiscriminately mingled with the ignorant and simple—the gods of war, those invincible and glorious heroes who filled the world with their fame, beside the vine-dresser and the labourer! To Thee only, O my God, belongeth glory, power, and immortality; and every vain title being destroyed and annihilated with the world which invented them, each one will appear surrounded only with his works!

In the second place, this examination will extend to all the actions of men; that is to say, He will again bring to your remembrance all the different periods and circumstances of your life: the foibles of infancy, which have escaped your recollection; the excesses of youth, almost every moment of which was spent in sin; the ambition and solicitude of riper years; the obduracy and vexation of an old age, perhaps still more voluptuous. How great will be your surprise, when, retracing the different posts which you have filled in the world, you will discover that you have been in each profane, dissolute, voluptuous, destitute of virtue, penitence, or good works; having passed through different situations only to treasure up wrath; and that you have lived in these divers states, as if all were to die together with you!

That variety of events, which here so rapidly succeed each other and entirely occupy our life, rivet our attention

to the present, and never permit us to recal the whole and to see our character at one view. We never see ourselves except in that point of light in which our present state exhibits us : the last situation is always that from which we form a judgment of ourselves. A devout desire, with which God sometimes favours us, quiets our minds respecting a state of indifference that lasted several years : a day passed in the exercise of piety, obliterates from our minds a whole life of disobedience : the confession of our faults at the penitential tribunal erases them from our remembrance, and they seem to us as though they had never been. In a word, we never discern any thing more of our consciences than the present. But before the August Judge the whole will be presented at the same time : the entire record will be unrolled. From the first sentiment formed in your mind to the last expiring sigh, all will be brought together under your view : all the iniquities dispersed through the different periods of your life will be re-united ; not an action, a desire, a thought, or a word, will be omitted : for if the hairs of our heads are all numbered, judge how it will be with our works. We shall see the whole course of our life revive, which as to us seemed to be annihilated, but which nevertheless remained in the remembrance of God : and we shall there behold—not those perishable histories, in which our vain actions were to be transmitted to posterity ; not that flattering account of our military exploits, of those brilliant events, which had filled so many volumes, and drawn forth so many eulogiums ; not those public memoirs, in which were recorded the eminence of our birth, the antiquity of our origin, the glory of our ancestors, the dignities which rendered them illustrious, the additional splendour which we had thrown around their names, and all the history, so to speak, of human illusion and error : that much boasted immortality which it promises to us, will be buried in the wreck of a universe : but we shall see the most frightful and exact history of our hearts, minds, and i ;

that is to say, that interior and invisible part of our life, which had been as unknown to ourselves as to others.

Yes, my brethren, besides the history of our exterior deportment, which will all be recollected, that which will most surprise us will be the secret history of our hearts, which will then be wholly exposed before our eyes—of those hearts which we had never examined, and which consequently we had never known—of those hearts which were continually concealed from ourselves, and which disguised the turpitude of their passions under specious names—of those hearts of whose elevation, uprightness, magnanimity, disinterestedness, and goodness, we made so great a boast; which public error and adulation had described as such, and which had raised us so much above others. The many unhallowed desires which were scarcely formed before we endeavoured to conceal them from ourselves; the many ridiculous projects respecting fortune and elevation, those agreeable errors to which our deceived hearts continually surrendered themselves; the many base and secret jealousies, which we through pride dissembled, but which were nevertheless the hidden spring of our actions; the many criminal dispositions, which led us a thousand times to wish that the pleasures of sense were either eternal, or exempt from punishment; the many enmities and animosities, which had, without our consciousness, corrupted our hearts; the many defiling and vicious intentions, which we were so successful in disguising to ourselves; the many sinful purposes, to the accomplishment of which only the opportunity was wanting, but which we considered as nothing, because they proceeded no further than the heart; in a word, that vicissitude of passions which continually succeeded each other: this is what will be spread before our eyes. We shall perceive innumerable crimes rise up, saith St. Bernard, as from an ambush, of which we never thought ourselves guilty: *prodient ex improviso, et quasi ex insidiis*: they will discover ourselves to ourselves: we

shall be made to enter into our hearts, which we never previously examined : a sudden light will flash into this abyss ; that mystery of iniquity will be disclosed to view ; and we shall perceive that the subject with which we were the least acquainted was ourselves.

To the examination of the evils of which we have been guilty, will succeed, in the third place, that of the good deeds which we failed to perform. The infinite omissions which occurred through our whole life, and concerning which we never felt the least remorse ; the many circumstances in which our characters engaged us to honour the truth, but in which we betrayed it by base self-interest, or by mean compliances ; the many opportunities of doing good, which the bounty of God afforded us, but which we almost constantly neglected ; the many instances of voluntary ignorance of which we had been guilty, having always feared the light, and fled from those who might instruct us ; the many events capable of opening our eyes, but which only served to increase our blindness ; the great good which we might have effected by our talents or example, and which we hindered by our vices ; the many souls whose innocence we might have preserved by our bounty, but whom we suffered to perish because we would not in the least lessen our profusions ; the many crimes from which we might have saved our inferiors, or our equals, by wise remonstrances or useful advice, which indolence, cowardice, or perhaps more criminal views, led us to suppress ; the many days and moments which we might have rendered subservient to our heavenly felicity, which we passed, either in a manner totally useless, or in a debasing effeminacy. And that which renders this the more terrible is this, that it was that part of our life which we esteemed the most innocent, and which presented to our remembrance only a great void.

What regret must the faithless person then experience, to see so long a succession of days wholly lost, or sacrificed to useless things, and to a world which will no longer exist

while a single moment consecrated to a promise-keeping God might have procured him the felicity of the saints! to see so many meannesses and subjections for the obtaining property or a worthless fortune, which was to continue but a moment, while the least difficulty endured for Jesus Christ might have secured him an everlasting kingdom! What regret to find that so much care and pains would not have been requisite to save, as he endured to ruin himself; and that one single day of that long life which was wholly employed for the world, would have sufficed to secure blessed eternity!

To this examination will succeed, in the fourth place, that of the favours you have abused; the many holy suggestions which you have either rejected, or only half attended to; the many cares and methods employed by Providence on behalf of your souls, rendered abortive; the many truths heard through our ministry which produced repentance and salvation in many others, but which failed to produce those effects in your hearts; the many afflictions and disappointments, which the Lord had appointed to recal you to himself, and of which you continually made so unworthy a use; the many gifts of nature, bestowed upon you as so many auspices of virtue, but which you made the occasion of vice. Ah! if the unprofitable servant is cast into outer darkness for having only hid his talent in the earth, with what indulgence can you expect to be treated, who, having received so many, employed them against the honour of the Master who committed them to you?

It is in this respect that the account will be terrible. Jesus Christ will demand of you the price of His blood. You sometimes complain that God does not do enough for you—that He caused you to be born weak, and of a constitution over which you had no control; and that He gave you not the graces necessary to resist the temptations which seduce you! Ah! you will then perceive that your whole life was a continual abuse of His favours: you will

see that, among the many infidel nations who know Him not, you have been privileged, enlightened, called to the faith; fed with the doctrine of truth and the virtue of sacraments, incessantly supported by His inspirations and graces: you will be terrified to behold all that God has done for you, and the little which you have rendered unto Him; and your complaints will be turned into a distressing confusion, which will find no resource but in your despair.

Hitherto the righteous Judge has examined you only concerning your personal crimes; but what will it be when He shall call you to account for those sins which you were either the occasion or the cause of in others, and which will consequently be imputed to you? What a new abyss! He will present to you all the souls to whom you were either the occasion of transgression or of stumbling; all the souls which your discourse, counsel, example, solicitations, or immodesty, precipitated with you into eternal ruin; all the souls whose weakness you seduced, whose innocence you corrupted, whose faith you perverted, whose virtue you shook, whose libertinism you authorized, or whose impiety you confirmed by your persuasions or your example. Jesus Christ, to whom they belonged, and who purchased them with his blood, will require them of you as a beloved heritage, as a precious conquest, of which you unjustly deprived him: and if the Lord set a mark of reprobation upon Cain, when he charged him with his brother's blood, judge what mark will be set upon you when He demands from you an account of his soul.

But this is not all. If you were a public character, and exalted to authority, what abuses authorized! what injustice sheltered, or tacitly permitted! what duties sacrificed, either to your own interests or to the passions and interests of others! what respect of persons, contrary to equity and conscience! what unjust enterprises, sanctioned by your counsel! what wars, what disorders, what public calamities, of which you perhaps were either the author, or the unworthy instrument! You will see that your ambition or counsel

was the fatal source of the unnumbered miseries and calamities of your age ; of those evils which pass from the fathers to the children and are perpetuated in the world ; and you will be surprised to see that your iniquities survived you ; and that you continued, even long after your death, to be guilty of an infinite number of crimes and disorders which took place in the world ! It is here, my brethren, you will learn the danger of public offices, the precipices which surround the throne, the quicksands which encompass dignities ; and what reason the Gospel had to pronounce those happy who lived in the obscurity of a private condition ; how great the wisdom of religion, which inspires us with so great a dread of ambition, with such indifference to worldly grandeur, with such contempt for every thing which is great only in the eyes of men, and is so often recommending us to love those things only which we ought always to love.

But perhaps, exempt from all those vices which we have been surveying, and for a long time attached to the duties of the Christian life, you presume that this terrible scrutiny does not relate to you, or that you shall appear with more confidence than the profane. Without doubt, my dear hearer, that will be to the righteous a day of triumph and glory ; a day which will justify those pretended excesses of retirement, mortification, modesty, and tenderness of conscience, which had furnished the world with so many profane censures and derisions : without doubt the saint will appear before the awful tribunal with more confidence than the sinner : but he will appear, and his very righteousness will be examined : your virtues and good works will undergo that strict examination. The world, which often refuses the most deserved praise to real virtue, sometimes readily grants it to the mere appearance of virtue. There are so many persons reputed righteous that deceive themselves, and owe that reputation only to the public error : hence I will not only visit Tyre and Sidon in the day of my wrath, saith the Lord—that is to say, those sinners.

whose crimes seem to confound them with infidels and with the inhabitants of Tyre and Sidon ;—but I will convey the terrors of my judgments even to Jerusalem—that is to say, I will examine, I will search, I will sound the motives of those holy works, which seem to equal you with the most faithful souls of the holy Jerusalem. *Scrutabor Jerusalem in lucernis*: “I will search Jerusalem with candles.” (Zeph. i. 12.)

I will go back to the motives of that conversion which occasioned so much noise in the world ; and it will be seen whether I do not find its source in secret disgust, in the decline of life or of fortune, in the secret desire of obtaining favour and exaltation, rather than in an hatred of sin and a love of righteousness. *Scrutabor Jerusalem in lucernis*: “I will search Jerusalem,” &c.

I will oppose those liberalities bestowed on the poor, those visits of mercy, that zeal for pious undertakings, that protection afforded to my servants, with the complacency, with the desire of esteem, with the ostentation, and with the selfish views, which infected them ; and perhaps in My eyes they will appear rather the fruit of pride than the effect of Divine grace, and the work of my Spirit. *Scrutabor Jerusalem in lucernis*: “I will search,” &c.

I will recal that constant succession of sacraments, prayers, and holy practices, which were become a kind of habit that no longer awakened in you the sentiments of faith and contrition ; and you will know whether the lukewarmness, the negligence, and the little fruit which accompanied them, the little inclination which preceded them, did not constitute them, in My sight, so many infidelities for which you will be judged without mercy.

I will examine that renouncement of the world and of pleasure, that singularity of conduct, and that affectation of modesty and regularity ; and perhaps I shall find more of humour, constitution, or idleness, than of faith ; and that, in a more regular and retired life in the eyes of men, you retained all your self-love, all your attachment to your

body, all your sensual delights, and, in a word, all the propensities of the most worldly minds. *Scrutabor, &c.* "I will search," &c.

I will examine that pretended zeal for My glory which caused you so sadly to groan under the offences and scandals which you witnessed; which led you to condemn them with so much eagerness and confidence, and so violently to cry out against the irregularities and weaknesses of your brethren: and perhaps in My sight that zeal will appear to have arisen from severity of temper, from natural malignity, from a disposition to censure and contradict, from an imprudent ardour, and from a vain and ostentatious zeal, and you will appear in My presence rash, cruel, unjust, and malicious. *Scrutabor, &c.*

I will require an account of those shining talents, which you employ, you pretend, only for My glory and for the instruction of the faithful, and which bring upon you both the blessing of the righteous and the acclamations of worldly persons; and perhaps that complacency, that continual self-seeking, that desire of superiority over others, and of human applause, will leave nothing to be discerned in your works but the labour or the pride of man; and I shall condemn those works which were always corrupted in their source. *Scrutabor, &c.*

Great God! how many works, which I depended upon, will then be found dead works in Thy sight! How dreadful will be the discovery! And, of all that you have done for heaven, how few will be the actions that you will wish to own as yours, and which will be judged worthy of reward! But do not conclude from hence, my brethren, that it is needless to labour for your salvation, since the righteous Judge will only seek the destruction of men. Only the destruction of men! my brethren? He came expressly to save them, and His mercy exceeds even His justice. But this is the conclusion which you ought rather to draw from thence: Those righteous persons, which you so often accuse of excess, of over-scrupulousness, in the duties of

the Christian life, as if they carried things too far—those persons, exposed to the light of God's countenance, will appear lukewarm, sensual, imperfect, and perhaps highly criminal: and you, who have lived in the perils and pleasures of the world; you, who devoted to religion and your own salvation only the most useless moments of your life; you, who scarcely introduced a single pious act into a whole year of idleness and dissipation, where will you appear, my dear hearer? If those who have only praiseworthy actions to present, will be in danger of being rejected, what can be your destiny, who have only a mere worldly life to offer? If the green wood is treated with as much severity, what will be done to the dry? And if the righteous scarcely be saved; I do not say, how will the sinner—for he is condemned already—but how will the worldly man, who lives destitute of virtue or vice, dare to shew himself?

You so often tell us, my dear hearer, that your conscience does not reproach you with any great crimes, that you are neither good nor evil, and that your only sins are those of indolence and sloth. Ah! you will be better acquainted with yourself before the tribunal of Jesus Christ. You will perceive whether the testimony of your conscience, which does not now reproach you with crimes, which scarcely offers you any thing to say at the feet of your confessor, was not a dreadful blindness, to which the justice of God had delivered you. You will perceive by the fears of the righteous what you ought to fear for yourself; and whether the confidence in which you always lived was the peace of a good conscience, or the false security of a worldly one.

O my God, exclaimed St. Augustin, if I could but now behold the state of my soul, as Thou wilt then discover it! *O si jam nunc faciem peccatricis animæ liceret oculis corporis intueri!* If I could but strip myself of those prejudices which deceive me; distrust the examples which confirm, the customs which calm, the praises which seduce, the

elevation and titles which deceive, the talents which dazzle, the complaisances of a sacred guide that constitute all my security, the self-love which is the source of all my errors; and that I could see myself, in Thy light, alone at Thy feet; O my God, what a horror should I have of myself! *O si jam nunc faciem peccatricis animæ liceret oculis corporis intueri!* And what steps should I not take to humble myself in Thy presence, to prevent the public confusion of that dreadful day, when the most secret counsels and thoughts will be manifested!—For, my brethren, the sinner will not only be shewn to himself, he will be exposed likewise to every creature.

Part II.—Two disorders arise in the world from the unavoidable mixture of the righteous and the wicked. First, through the favour of this mixture, secret vice is secured from that public disgrace which it deserves, and concealed virtue does not receive the praise which it merits. Secondly, the sinner is often raised to honour, and put into the highest offices; while the good man lives in abasement, and crawls as a slave at his feet. Now, in that terrible day there will be a double disclosure, which will rectify that double disorder. In the first place, sinners will be distinguished from the righteous by the public exposure of all the secrets of their hearts. In the second place, they will be distinguished by their separation from them, and by the different ranks and places which will be assigned to them in the air: *Et separabit eos ab invicem, sicut pastor segregat oves ab hædis.*—Honour me, I pray, with your attention.

To comprehend all the confusion which will overwhelm the criminal, when he shall be exposed to every creature, and when his most secret vices will be fully brought to light, it is only necessary to pay attention, first, to the number and character of the spectators who will be witnesses to his shame; secondly, to the pains which he took to hide his weaknesses and dissolute practices from the

eyes of men while he was upon the earth ; thirdly and finally, to those personal qualities which will render his confusion more deep and overwhelming.

1. Now, image to yourselves, my brethren, the criminal before the tribunal of Christ, surrounded with angels and men—the righteous, sinners, neighbours, subjects, sovereigns, friends, enemies, all present, with every eye fixed upon him, during the strict examination which the righteous Judge will then institute upon his actions, his desires, and his thoughts ; and compelled, in spite of themselves, to assist in his trial, and to be witnesses to the justice of the sentence which the Son of Man will pronounce upon him. All those resources which here mitigate the most humiliating disgrace will fail the unfaithful soul in that day.

The first resource.—Upon earth, when we have been guilty of a crime which has exposed us to contempt, the whole has depended upon certain witnesses residing in our own nation, or in the place of our birth : in the course of time we may retire to a distance from them, so as no longer to have the remembrance and reproach of our past disgrace exposed to their observation : we may remove our abode, and go elsewhere, to recover among strangers the reputation which we have lost. But in that great day the whole assembled world will listen to the secret history of our minds and practices : you will be unable to hide yourselves in distant parts from the eyes of the spectators, to go in search of new countries, or to flee, like Cain into the wilderness. Each will be immovably fixed in the place assigned to him, bearing emblazoned on his forehead his condemnation, and the whole history of his life ; obliged to sustain the eyes of the universe, and all the disgrace of his weaknesses and follies. There will be no longer any distant part to which he can retire to hide himself from public notice : the light of God, the glory of the Son of Man, will fill heaven and earth ; and in that vast space which will surround you, you will discover every eye fixed upon you.

The second resource.—Upon earth, even when our disgrace becomes public, and when a shameful crime has degraded us in the estimation of men, there is always a small number of friends prejudiced in our favour, whose esteem and intercourse in some measure indemnify us for the general contempt, and whose indulgence helps us to bear up against the severe censure of the public. But in that day the presence of our friends will be the most insupportable part of our disgrace. If they are sinners like ourselves, they will reproach us with our usual pleasures and example, in which they perhaps found the first snare to their innocence: if they are righteous, as they possessed a single eye and thought us children of light, they will reproach us with betraying their confidence and imposing on their friendship. ‘You loved the righteous,’ they will say, ‘and you hated righteousness; you protected virtue, yet in your hearts you placed vice upon the throne: you sought in us the uprightness, fidelity, and security, which you could not find in your worldly friends; but you did not seek the Lord, who formed these virtues in our hearts. Ah! does not the Author of all our gifts deserve to be more loved and sought than ourselves?’

And this is the third resource which will then fail the confused and guilty soul; That if here below no friends are found affected with our misfortunes, there are at least some uninterested persons who are not wounded by our faults, and who do not violently rise up against us. But in that terrible day we shall have no indifferent spectators. The righteous, who are here so affected with the calamities of their brethren—who are so ingenious to excuse their faults, to cover them with the mantle of love, or to mitigate them in the eyes of men, when they can find no sufficient excuse for them—the righteous, having then, I say, laid aside, after the pattern of the Son of Man, that indulgence and mercy which they had exercised towards their enemies upon earth, will hiss upon sinners, saith the Prophet; will insult them; will require the Lord to avenge His glory in

their punishment ; will partake of His zeal, and come into the interest of His justice ; and, becoming themselves his judges, they will decidedly declare, saith the Prophet, " This, then, is the man who would not put his trust and confidence in the Lord, and who preferred trusting in vanity and lies ! " *Ecce homo, qui non posuit Deum adiutorem suum !* (Psal. li. 9.) This is the fool who thought himself the only wise man upon the earth ; who regarded the life of the righteous as folly ; and who made the favour of the great, their vain titles and dignities, their extensive lands and possessions, and the esteem and praise of men, a frail defence, which will perish together with him ! Where now are those sovereigns, those gods of flesh and blood, to whom he sacrificed his life, his care, and his pains ? Let them appear to support and defend him ; let them come and secure him from the calamities which are about to be poured upon him—or, rather, to guard themselves from the condemnation which threatens them. *Ubi sunt dii eorum, in quibus habebant fiduciam ? Surgant et opitulentur vobis, et in necessitate vos protegant.*—Sinners will be no longer indulgent to his misfortune. They will possess the same horror of him which they will be forced to have of themselves : the mutual participation of misery, which ought to unite them, will only be turned into an enmity which will divide them—into a barbarous inhumanity, which will leave in their hearts only dispositions of cruelty and rage towards their brethren ; and they will hate in others the same crimes which occasion their own misery.—Finally, the most distant and the most savage persons, to whom the name of Jesus Christ had never been announced, now, too late, come to the knowledge of the truth, will rise up to reproach you ; declaring, that if the wonders which God wrought in vain in the midst of you had been performed before them—that if they had been, like you, enlightened by the Gospel, and supported by the aids of Revelation and of the sacraments, they should have repented in sack-

cloth and ashes, and have employed for their salvation the favours which you abused to your ruin.

Such will be the confusion of the reprobate. Accursed of God, he will perceive himself rejected both of heaven and earth, the reproach and execration of every creature. Even the inanimate creatures, which he forced to become subservient to his passions, and which groaned, saith St. Paul, waiting for a deliverance from that disgraceful bondage, will, after their way, rise up against him. The sun, whose light he had abused, will be darkened, no longer to behold his crimes: the stars will disappear, as if to inform him that they have been for a sufficient time the witnesses of his sinful passions: the earth will crumble to pieces under his feet, as if to cast forth from its womb a monster which it could no longer bear: and the whole universe, saith the Wise Man, will arm itself against him, to avenge the glory of the Lord which he had insulted: *Et pugnabit cum illo orbis terrarum contra insensatos*. Alas! we are so fond of being pitied in our misfortunes that the least indifference irritates and distresses us: *there*, every heart will not only be unaffected with our misery, but every spectator will insult us in our disgrace, and the sinner will be left to his confusion, despair, and crimes. The first particular in the confusion of the criminal is the number of the witnesses.

2. I take the second particular from the care which he took to disguise himself in the eyes of men, while he lived upon the earth. For, my brethren, the world is a great theatre, upon which almost every one acts an assumed part. As we possess so many passions, and each one continually possesses something mean and contemptible, our whole attention is directed to conceal their baseness, and to appear what we are not. Iniquity always acts the part of a hypocrite. Hence your whole life—especially of you who now listen to me, and who consider the duplicity of your character as the wisdom of the world and of the court—your

whole life has been nothing but a succession of disguises and artifices. You are only half known even to your sincere and familiar friends. You deceived every one. You changed your character, sentiments, and inclinations, according to circumstances or the characters of those whom you wished to please : by which means you acquired a reputation for ability and wisdom. But there you will appear a vile person, destitute of uprightness and truth, and whose greatest virtue consisted in concealing his disgrace and meanness.

You likewise, faithless soul, which a sex more jealous of honour had rendered more careful to conceal your weaknesses from the knowledge of others—you, who were so ingenious to preserve yourself from the disgrace of a surprise—you, who took such studied and sure methods to deceive the eyes of a husband, the vigilance of a mother, the faithfulness of your confessor—you, who would not have survived an accident which should, in that respect, have betrayed your precautions and artifices—Useless care ! You cover, saith the Prophet, your debaucheries only with a spider's web ; which the Son of Man will dissipate in that great day with the mere breath of his mouth. I will gather around you, saith the Lord, all your profane lovers in the presence of assembled nations : *Congregabo super te omnes amatores tuos*. They will see that perpetual succession of dissimulation, artifices, and meannesses ; that shameful traffic of protestations and oaths which you employed, at the same time to gratify your own various passions and to lull their credulity to sleep : they will see them, and, tracing those criminal compliances to their source, they will find them, not in their pretended merit, as you wished to persuade them, but in your wicked character ; in a naturally passionate, which you boasted of as noble and sincere, and incapable of being affected except *Congregabo super te omnes amatores tuos . . et vnam turpitudinem tuam*. And all this will take the sight of the universe—of your friends, which of regularity preserved to you ; of your

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not the dishonour with which you covered them; of your confessor, whom you always deceived; and of the husband who relied so much on your fidelity: *Et videbunt omnem turpitudinem tuam.*

O my God! will the earth then possess any abyss so deep, that the unfaithful soul would not gladly hide himself therein! For in the world, men only see the exterior, the opprobrium of our vices; and that confusion is common to us with those who daily find themselves guilty of the same crimes. But before the tribunal of Jesus Christ, our weaknesses will be seen even in our very hearts—that is to say, their rise, progress, and most secret motives, and a thousand shameful and particular aggravations, at which we blush more than at the crimes themselves. This is a confusion that will belong solely to ourselves, and which we shall divide with no one. *Et videbunt omnem turpitudinem tuam.*

3. Finally, the last circumstance which will render the shame of the sinner overwhelming, will be his personal qualities.

You passed for a faithful, sincere, and generous friend; they will perceive that you were cowardly, perfidious, and interested; destitute of faith, honour, conscience, and character. You pretended to strength of mind, and to an elevation above vulgar weaknesses; and you are about to expose the most humiliating meannesses, and such circumstances as would cause the vilest soul to die with shame. In the world you were regarded as a man of integrity, and as honest in the administration of your affairs; that reputation probably drew upon you new honours, and the confidence of the public; yet you abused that credibility: the pompous exteriors of equity concealed a base and cringing soul; and considerations of fortune and interest a thousand times betrayed your fidelity and corrupted your innocence. You appeared adorned with parity and justice; you were always clothed with the appearance of the righteous; you were thought the friend of God and the

faithful observer of His law ; yet your heart was not upright in His sight : you concealed under the veil of religion a polluted conscience and shameful mysteries of iniquity, and you trampled upon holy things the more surely to obtain your ends. Ah ! you will, in that day of revelation, undeceive every one. Those whom you saw upon the earth, surprised at your new condition, will seek for the honest man in the reprobate : the hope of the hypocrite will then be confounded : you unjustly enjoyed the esteem of men ; you will then be known, and God will be avenged.

Finally—but dare I to speak it in this place, and to reveal the disgrace of my brethren ?—you were perhaps a dispenser of holy things ; were raised to honour in the temple of God ; the guardianship of the faith, of doctrine, and of piety, was committed to you ; you daily appeared in the sanctuary, clothed with the awful marks of your dignity, offering holy gifts and sacrifices without spot : to you were committed the secrets of men's consciences ; you strengthened the weak in the faith, you spake wisdom among them that were perfect : and under every thing the most august and sacred which religion possessed, you perhaps concealed that which the world possesses the most execrable,—you were a deceiver, a man of sin sitting in the temple of God ; you taught others, but you taught not yourself ; you inspired others with an horror of idols, while every day witnessed your sacrilege ! Ah ! the mystery of iniquity will then be revealed, and you will be known to be what in reality you always were, the accursed of heaven, and the disgrace of the earth, *Et videbunt omnem turpitudinem tuam.*

See, my brethren, all the confusion which will overwhelm the guilty soul. And this will not be a transient confusion. There is nothing painful to be experienced in this world but the first shame that is attached to a false report dies away by little and little ; new evidence takes the place of those relating to ourselves ; and the splendour of our falls are extinguished, and v:

report which published them. But in that great day the disgrace of the criminal will remain for ever: there will be no new events to cause his crimes and reproach to be lost sight of. Nothing will change; all will be fixed and eternal. That which he appears before the tribunal of Jesus Christ, he will appear throughout eternity; the nature of his torment will continually proclaim the nature of his faults, and his shame will daily recommence with his punishment. My brethren, reflections here are useless; and if there yet remains any faith in you, it becomes you to examine yourselves, and from this moment to take steps to sustain the disclosures of that awful day.

But, after having shewn you the public confusion with which the sinner will be covered, why may I not set before you what will be the glory and consolation of the truly righteous man, when the secrets of his conscience and all the mysteries of his heart will be exposed to the eyes of the whole universe—of that heart whose whole beauty, concealed from the eyes of men, was known only to God; of that heart in which he thought he always perceived spots and defilements, and whose humility concealed from himself all its sanctity and innocence; of that heart in which God alone took up His abode, and which He took delight in adorning and enriching with His gifts and graces? What new wonders will be presented to the eyes of the spectators, when the veil is removed from that Divine sanctuary, till then so inaccessible! what fervent desires! what secret victories! what heroic sacrifices! what holy prayers! what affecting groans! what transports of affection! what faith! what greatness and magnanimity! what elevation above all the vain objects which constitute all the desires and all the hopes of men! They will then perceive that nothing was greater and more worthy of admiration in the world, than a truly righteous man; than those persons who were regarded as useless because they did not subserve their passions, and whose obscure and retired life was so much despised. They will perceive that

what passed in a faithful soul possessed more greatness and glory than all the most brilliant events which took place upon the earth ; and that that alone deserved to be written in the books of eternity, and to be presented to the eyes of God—a spectacle more worthy of angels and men than the victories and conquests which crowd the page of profane history, and to which pompous monuments are erected to perpetuate their remembrance ; and which will then be no more regarded than childish agitations, or than the fruits of human pride and passion. This is the first disorder which will be rectified in that great day : Vice in the present life is concealed from public disgrace, and virtue is deprived of the praise which it deserves.

The second disorder which arises in the world, from the mingling of the good with the wicked, is the inequality of their condition, and the unjust exchange of their destinies. The present world resembles the statue whose mystery Daniel explained : the righteous, like the clay trampled under foot or the iron hardened by the fire of tribulation, commonly occupies only the meanest and most contemptible position ; while sinners and worldly characters, represented by gold and silver, the vain objects of their passions, are found almost always placed at the head, and in the most eminent places. Now, this is a disorder ; and although the good are thereby exercised, and sinners hardened ; although this confusion of good and evil enters into the plan of Divine providence, and God does, by inexplicable ways and management, employ them to conduct both the righteous and the wicked to their end ; it is nevertheless necessary that the Son of Man should restore all things : *Per ipsum instaurare omnia* (Ephes. i. 10) : and that we may “ discern between the righteous and the wicked ; between him who serves and him who despises Him : ” *Quid sit inter justum et impium ; et inter servientem Deo, et non servientem ei*. Now this is the spectacle of that last day. Order will be restored : the good will be separated from the wicked, and the one placed at the right and the other at the left :

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statuet oves quidem à dextris suis, hædos autem à sinistris.

In the first place, a separation altogether new. In order to determine the rank which you should occupy in that formidable scene, you will not be asked your name, birth, titles, or dignities : these were a mere vapour, which had no reality but what arose from the public mistake : it will only be examined whether you are an unclean animal, or an innocent sheep. The prince will not be separated from the subject, the nobleman from the labourer, the poor from the powerful, the conqueror from the vanquished : but the chaff from the wheat, the vessels of honour from those of dishonour, and the goats from the sheep: *Et statuet oves quidem à dextris suis, hædos autem à sinistris.*

We shall see the Son of Man surveying, from the height of the air, the people and nations assembled and mingled together at His feet ; re-perusing in that spectacle the history of the universe, that is to say, the passions and virtues of men : we shall see Him collecting His elect from the four winds, His chosen out of every tongue, condition, and nation ; re-uniting the children of Israel scattered abroad ; exposing the secret history of a holy and new people ; and producing on the stage heroes of faith till then unknown to the world : no longer distinguishing different ages by the victories of conquerors, by the rise or fall of empires, by the politeness or the barbarity of the times, by the great men who have appeared in every age ; but by the divers triumphs of grace, by the secret victories of the righteous over their passions, by the establishment of His reign in the heart, and by the heroic firmness of a persecuted believer. You will see Him change the face of things ; create a new heaven and a new earth ; and reduce this infinite variety of nations, titles, conditions, and dignities, to a holy or a reprobate people, to goats or sheep: *Et statuet oves quidem à dextris suis, hædos autem à sinistris.*

Secondly, a cruel separation. The father will be sepa-

rated from the child, friend from friend, brother from brother—one will be taken, and the other left. Death, which now tears from us beloved friends, and which causes us to utter so many sighs and to shed so many tears, leaves us at least the consolatory hope of being one day re-united to them. *There*, the separation will be eternal; there will be no hope of re-union: we shall have no more neighbours, fathers, children, or friends; no longer any bonds of union, except eternal flames, which will for ever associate us with reprobates.

Thirdly, an ignominious separation. We are keenly alive to the least preference, when on a striking occasion we are forgotten, and are left confounded in the crowd: we are deeply pained when, in the distribution of favours, we behold inferiors obtaining the principal places, our services forgotten, and those whom we always saw beneath elevated above us; but it is in that great day that a preference will be accompanied with the most humbling circumstances to the guilty. It is *then* you will behold, in that universal silence, in that state of terrible suspense in which every one will remain respecting the decision of his destiny, the Son of Man advancing in the air, holding crowns in one hand and the rod of His anger in the other; coming to take from your side a righteous character, whose innocence you had perhaps either calumniated by rash discourse, or whose virtue you had ridiculed by wicked pleasantries—a believer, who perhaps was born your subject—a Lazarus, who had in vain importuned you with the relation of his poverty and necessities—a rival, whom you continually regarded with contempt, and upon whose ruin your intrigues and artifices had exalted you: you will see the Son of Man place an immortal crown upon his head, and seat him at His right hand; while you, like the proud Haman, rejected, humbled, and degraded, will have your eyes fixed only on the awful array of your punishment.

Yes, my brethren, every thing of an overwhelming nature which a preference can possess, will be found in this

A savage, converted to the faith, will find his place among the sheep; and the professed Christian, the heir of the promises, will be left among the goats;—a layman will mount like an eagle around the body; and the minister of Jesus Christ will remain upon the earth, covered with shame and reproach;—the man of business will pass to the right, and the hermit to the left;—the sage, the learned, the investigator of the age, will be driven among the unclean animals; and the idiot, who was unable to answer to the common benedictions, will be placed on a throne of light and glory;—Rahab, the harlot, will rise to the celestial Zion, with the true Israelite; and the sister of Moses, and the spouse of Jesus Christ, will be separated from the camp and tents of Israel, and will appear covered with a disgraceful leprosy: *Et statuet oves quidem à dextris suis, hædos autem à sinistris.* It is thy will, O my God, that nothing should be wanting to complete the despair of an unfaithful person. It will not suffice to overwhelm him with the load of his own misery: thou wilt also make the felicity of the righteous, who are preferred before him, and whom he will behold carried by angels into the bosom of immortality, an additional punishment to him.

What a change of scene in the universe, my brethren! It is then, when every scandal is removed from the kingdom of Jesus Christ, and the righteous are wholly separated from sinners, that they will form a chosen nation, a holy generation, the church of the first-born whose names are written in heaven. It is then, that that intercourse with the wicked, which is unavoidable upon earth, will no longer grieve their faith, nor endanger their innocence. It is then, when their portion no longer possesses any thing in common with infidels and hypocrites, that they will no longer be content to be witnesses of their crimes, or at times even involuntary ministers of their passions. It is then, that, all the bonds of society, of authority, or of dependence, which attached them to the wicked and to worldlings, being broken, they will: the

prophet, "Lord, why dost thou here prolong our exile and our abode? Our souls dry up with grief at a view of the crimes and prevarications with which the world is infected." Finally, it is then that their weeping will be turned into joy, and their groans into thanksgiving: they will pass to the right, like sheep; and the left will be for the goats, *i. e.* the wicked. *Et statuet, &c.*

The state of the universe thus fixed; all the nations of the earth thus separated; each individual immovable in the place which will fall to him as his portion; surprise, terror, despair, and confusion painted upon the visage of the one; joy, serenity, and confidence upon that of the other; the eyes of the righteous raised on high towards the Son of Man, from whence they expect their deliverance; those of the wicked fixed with horror upon the earth, and piercing almost to the abyss, as if already to discover the place appointed to them; the King of Glory, saith the Gospel, placed in the midst of two nations, will advance, and, turning towards those at His right, will say, with an air full of sweetness and majesty, and of itself sufficient to console them for all their past pains, "'Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.'" Sinners always regarded you as the reprobate, and the most useless portion of the world: let them learn this day that the world itself only subsisted for your sake; that every thing was made for you, and that every thing terminated as soon as your number was completed. Leave, at length, a land in which you were always strangers and pilgrims; follow Me into immortal glory and felicity, as you followed Me in my humiliation and sufferings. Your labours lasted but for a moment; the felicity you are going to enjoy will endure for ever: 'Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.'"

Then,
His

is the left, with vengeance and fury
as avenging thunders

upon the innumerable criminals; with a voice, saith a prophet, which will open the bowels of the abyss to swallow them up, He will say—not, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do,” as when He hung upon the cross—but, “Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.” You were the chosen of the world; but you were cursed of my Father. Your pleasures were rapid and transient; your pains will be eternal. *Discedite à me, maledicti, in ignem æternum, qui paratus est diabolo et angelis ejus.*” The righteous, ascending with the Son of Man, will begin to sing that heavenly song: Thou art rich in mercy, O Lord, and thou hast crowned thy gifts by recompensing our merit. Then the wicked will curse the Author of their being, and the fatal day which gave them birth; or, rather, they will be enraged against themselves, as the authors of their own misery and ruin. The abyss will open, the heavens will descend: the reprobate, saith the Gospel, will depart into eternal punishment, and the righteous into life eternal: ~~*Ibunt hi in supplicium æternum, justi autem in vitam æternam.*~~ This is a portion which will be unchangeable and eternal.

After so alarming a relation, and one so suited to make an impression upon the most obdurate heart, I cannot conclude without addressing the same words to you which Moses formerly addressed to the Israelites, after having set before them the terrible threatenings and the consoling promises included in the book of the law. Children of Israel, said that wise legislator, I set before you a blessing and a curse: *En propono in conspectu vestro hodie benedictionem et maledictionem.* A blessing, if you obey the commandments of the Lord your God: *Benedictionem, si obedieritis mandatis Domini:* and a curse, if you depart from the ways which I shew unto you, to follow strange gods: *Maledictionem, si recesseritis de via quam ego nunc ostendo vobis, et ambulaveritis post deos alienos.*

This is what I address to you, my brethren, in concluding

so alarming a subject. To you it now belongs to choose and decide: there are the right, and the left—the promises, and the threatenings. Your destiny turns upon this dreadful alternative,—either you will be on the side of Satan and his angels, or you will be elected with Jesus Christ and his saints; there is no medium here. I have shewn you the way which leads to life, and that which conducts to perdition. In which of these do you walk? and on which side should you find yourselves, were you at this moment to appear before the dreadful tribunal? Men die as they have lived. Fear lest that which would be your destiny at this day, should become your eternal portion. Depart instantly from the way of sinners, and begin to live as the righteous, if you desire in that day to be placed at the right hand of Christ, and to rise with His saints to a blissful immortality. Amen.

NOTES.

NOTE A—(p. 21).

“*The whole merit of submission.*”—The doctrine of human merit, referred to in this and in various other passages, is not consistent with the testimony of Scripture. Instead, however, of a lengthened discussion on the subject, I shall content myself with presenting to the reader the concession of Bellarmine, an Italian, of the Society of Jesus, who by his lectures on controversy acquired so much applause that he was raised successively to different offices in the Church of Rome, till at length he was constrained to accept a cardinal's hat. The Cardinal's words are: “*Propter incertitudinem propriæ justitiæ, et periculum inanis gloriæ, tutissimum est fiduciam totam in sola misericordia Dei et benignitate reponere*” (Lib. v. ch. 7, prop. 3) i. e.—“By reason of the uncertainty of our own righteousness, and the danger of vain-glory, it is the safest course to repose our whole trust in the mercy and kindness of God alone.”—These sentiments he very properly confirms by two quotations from the Sacred Scriptures: Dan. ix. 18, “For we do not present our supplication before thee for our righteousness, but for thy great mercy;” and Luke xvii. 10, “When ye shall have done all these things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.” The Cardinal then cites several of the Fathers in favour of his opinion, and concludes with this dilemma: “Either a man hath true merits, or he hath not: if he hath not, he is perniciously deceived; if he hath them, he loses nothing while he looks not to them, but trusts in God alone.” (See *Evang. Mag.* for June 1799.) The candid reader will here judge which side of the question is the most consistent with the Inspired Volume, and consequently the safest foundation on which to repose his hopes for eternity. And the words of Massillon himself, at the close of his sermon on the Divinity of Christ, are in perfect accordance with these sentiments—see p. 96.

NOTE B—(p. 28).

While the Translator deplors the sad divisions into which the Protestant Church has been torn, he would request those, who employ the *professed* unity of the Roman Catholic Church as an argument in favour of the purity of that communion, to consider whether that church has not been agitated and divided by the most bitter dissensions; and whether an equal variety of sentiments has not existed among different doctors belonging to that communion. Let them refer to the history of the fourteenth century, when the Roman Catholic Church had, during the space of fifty years, two or three different heads: each contending Pope form-

thundering out words of judgment and contention and warning, and the people went far toward the temple with all their people. As it might appear, the Lord confounding sinners who are in any persons within the temple, and entreating *all* who then *for* the scripture of truth as the only path, or that Divine mission "gladly to be" they become assimilated to the spiritual foundation and *every* stone of the spiritual temple, *hit* near to each other, and the temple be answered, "That the people of the Lord." John 2:21-22

NOTE G—(p. 192).

How can this language of Massillon be reconciled with the Scriptural account of man as a fallen and depraved creature? Let the reader consider the following passages: Jer. xvii. 9, 10, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" &c.; Mat. xv. 19, "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries," &c.; John iii. 6, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh;" and Rom. iii. 12, "They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable: there is none that doeth good; no, not one."

NOTE H—(p. 222).

Let the serious inquirer after truth consider to whom the crime of *heresy* is justly imputable—to those who retain or return to the truth of the Gospel, or to those who depart from its simplicity and impose human traditions? "To the law and to the testimony" the appeal must be made.

NOTE I—(p. 183).

It is common in France to call an *ague*, and even a *cold*, by the general name of a fever. Massillon, when speaking here of the fever with which Simon's wife's mother was afflicted, probably retained in his mind the idea of an *ague*, or of a cold, either of which is a more natural image of a state of *lukewarmness* than a fever.

NOTE K—(p. 200).

"*Those purified by the expiation of a holy and Christian life.*"—Similar, erroneous expressions occur pp. 192, 222, 257, 272, 273. How can these sentiments be reconciled with the following Scriptures: Rom. iii. 25, "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood;" Heb. x. 14, "For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified" (or expiated, as the word is several times used by the Apostle); 1 John i. 7, "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." Christ is the only expiatory sacrifice, as it respects the purifying of the conscience. (See Heb. ix. 13). The sacrifices of the law only served to the purifying of the flesh, or as types of the sacrifice of Christ. All that is necessary in the way of expiation has been effected by the sacrifice of Christ.

NOTE L—(p. 344, also p. 251).

Is it not to be feared that many are led to depend on this and other ceremonies, instead of placing their hopes on the Redeemer himself? An undue stress laid upon mere ceremonies and human appointments led the Apostle Paul to say to the Galatians, "I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain" (iv. 11).







